PART THREE

EARLY MAHĀYĀNA BUDDHISM

CHAPTER 14

The Evolution of the Order after Aśoka

India after Aśoka

THE MAURYAN EMPIRE declined rapidly after the death of King Aśoka (r. c. 268–232 B.C.E.) and was finally destroyed by the general Puṣyamitra in approximately 180 B.C.E.[1] Puṣyamitra founded the Śuṅga dynasty; however, his power never extended beyond the Gangetic plain. Also at this time, a succession of Greek kings invaded northwestern India and established several dynasties. In southern India the Śātavāhana dynasty, an Āndhran dynasty, was established on the Deccan plain and remained in power from 200 B.C.E. until the third century C.E. During the four centuries in which this dynasty ruled, a flourishing culture developed in politically stable South India. Finally, along the east coast in the former lands of Kaliṅga, the Ceti dynasty was founded. Its third king, Khāravela (fl. first century B.C.E.), was particularly famous. Inscriptions describing his accomplishments have been discovered, but the later history of the dynasty is unknown.

Śuṅga Dynasty

The Śuṅga dynasty, founded by Puṣyamitra, lasted for 112 years. Although Puṣyamitra supported Brahmanism and persecuted Buddhism, most later kings in this dynasty favored Buddhism. Inscriptions record that King Dhānabhuti-Vāchiputa contributed a gate (toraṇa) and stone building (silākammaṃta) to the Buddhist stūpa at Bhārhut. His son,

Prince Vādhapāla, made contributions for the erection of the railing
(vedikā) that surrounds the *stūpa*. In addition, Queen Nāgarakhitā gave
donations for the construction of the railing. Inscriptions found at
Mathurā reveal that Vādhapāla also helped with the building of the rail-
ing there.

Bhārhut and Sāñcī

Bhārhut is situated in the southwestern part of central India on the
main road from the west coast inland to Magadha. Because of its loca-
tion, the Buddhist complex at Bhārhut was completely destroyed by
non-Buddhists who invaded India. In 1873 A. Cunningham, a British
general who conducted an archeological survey of India, discovered the
ruins. The east gate and those parts of the railing that had suffered the
least damage were subsequently taken to the Calcutta Museum,
restored, and exhibited. They indicate that Bhārhut was a magnificent
site. An inscription concerning King Dhānabhuti was found on a pillar
of the east gate. The *stūpa* dates from the middle of the second century
B.C.E., the height of the Śuṅga dynasty.

Pāṭaliputra and Vidiśā were the political centers of the Śuṅga
dynasty. Because King Aśoka's son Mahinda was a native of Vidiśā, the
town became a major center of Buddhism; there were many *stūpas* in its
environs. More than sixty of these *stūpas,* known collectively as the
"Bhīlsa Topes," have been discovered. Although most of them are in
ruins, the ones at Sāñcī—approximately twenty, both large and small—
are still in good condition. The famous great *stūpa* at Sāñcī is well pre-
served. It is an imposing structure, 16.4 meters high and with a diame-
ter of 37 meters. Research has revealed that it began as a small tiled
stūpa built during Aśoka's time and that subsequently it was covered
with stone and expanded to its present proportions during the Śuṅga
dynasty. Railings were later built around it and four gates pointing in
the cardinal directions were constructed. Of the four gates, the southern
one is the oldest. An inscription states that it was constructed during the
early period of the Andhran dynasty. Thus the *stūpa* was gradually built
and expanded during the Mauryan, Śuṅgan, and Āndhran dynasties.
The four gates are covered with delicate relief carvings that have made
Sāñcī famous among art historians.

Since most of the kings of the Śuṅga dynasty favored Buddhism, the
religion made substantial advances during this period. Many of the
railings of Bhārhut were carved at this time. The inscriptions on them
indicate that the biography of the Buddha and the *jātaka* tales were the

favorite subjects for carving. Fifteen scenes from the biography of the Buddha and thirty-two from the *Jātakas* have been identified. In the scenes from the biography of the Buddha, the figure of the Buddha is not represented as a human being but is instead symbolized by the *bodhi*-tree with an adamantine seat before it. Animals and people are depicting paying homage to the seat. Because the Buddha had entered *nirvāṇa*, many felt that he could not be represented in human form. In addition, the appearance of *bodhi*-trees representing the seven past Buddhas (Śākyamuni was the seventh) in the carvings suggests that people believed in the seven Buddhas during this period.

The names of those people who contributed to the construction of the railings and other structures at Bhārhut were recorded in inscriptions at the site. An examination of the surviving 209 inscriptions yields valuable information about those who supported the construction of Bharhut. Names of individual monks and nuns are included in the inscriptions. Some of them had titles such as *peṭakin* (one who upholds a *piṭaka*) or *pacanekāyika* (one who is well versed in the five *Nikāyas*). Such titles indicate that the canon was already divided into at least the *Sutta-piṭaka* and *Vinaya-piṭaka* at this time. An *Abhidhamma-piṭaka* may also have been established by this time. The term "five *Nikāyas*" suggests that the *Sutta-piṭaka* was already divided into five parts, probably in the same manner as was done in Pāli Buddhism. The title *suttantika* (*sutta*-master) is also found.

Six examples occur of people called *bhāṇaka* (chanters of scripture). Pāli sources, such as the *Visuddhimagga*, include the terms *Dīgha-bhāṇaka* (one who chants the *Dīgha-nikāya*) and *Majjhima-bhāṇaka* (one who chants the *Majjhima-nikāya*), indicating that some people specialized in certain *Nikāyas*. The term *"Dharma-bhāṇaka"* (chanters of the Dharma) appears in Mahāyāna sources. Since the inscriptions at Bharhut use only the term *"bhāṇaka,"* the contents of the chanting remain unclear. One of the six chanters in these inscriptions is called *ārya* (sage) and three are called *bhadanta* (venerable). These four chanters were monks; however, the other two chanters have no appellation indicating that they were monks. The previously mentioned *peṭakin* was called the "sage *(aya)* Jāta" and was thus clearly a monk. "The master of the five *Nikāyas*," however, was only called "Budharakhita," leaving his status unclear. The *"sutta*-master" was called the "sage *(aya)* Cula" and was therefore a monk.

Sāñcī is southwest of Bhārhut, near the border between central and western India. The inscriptions collected from Sāñcī number 904, many more than were found at Bhārhut. Included among these are inscriptions on the lids and bases of five funerary urns discovered at *stūpa* num-

ber 2. The contents of two of the urns are identified as the "remains of the sage of the Kāsapagota family who taught in the Himalayan area" and "the remains of the sage Majhima." In such works as the *Samantapāsādikā* (*T* 24:685a), these two men are said to have spread Buddhism to the Himalayan regions during Aśoka's reign. Another urn is identified as containing the remains of "Mogaliputa" and may have contained the relics of Moggaliputta Tissa, King Aśoka's teacher. Four urns were discovered in *stūpa* number 3. One of these has an inscription identifying the contents as the remains of "Sāriputa." The inscription on another states that it contains the remains of "Mahā-mogalāna." These may have some relation to two of the Buddha's chief disciples, Śāriputra and Mahā-moggallāna (S. Mahāmaudgalyāyana); however, the urns appear to date only from the second century B.C.E.

The four gates and the railings at Sāñcī were built in the first century B.C.E. The gates are decorated with delicate relief carvings portraying deities who guard Buddhism, as well as twenty-eight scenes from the Buddha's life and six from *jātaka* tales. The names of a very large number of donors are also found on the gates and railings. Included are monks, nuns, and lay believers. The names of many more nuns than monks are recorded. The large number of inscriptions such as "a donation of the nun Yakhī who is a resident of Vāḷīvahana" indicate that many of the donors did not live at Sāñcī. Many of the monks and nuns were from Vidiśā. The residences of some donors are not recorded.

In inscriptions concerning lay believers, the appellations *upasāka* (layman) and *upāsikā* (laywoman) rarely appear; usually only their names are recorded. The reason for this omission remains unclear. There are also five examples in which the donors are called "householder" *(gahapati)* and seventeen in which they are called "head of the guild" *(seṭṭhi)*. The greater frequency of the term "head of the guild" is an indication of the large numbers of believers from the merchant class. In addition, there are two or three examples of contributions by villages and several by Buddhist organizations *(Bodha-goṭhī, Bauddha-goṣṭhī)*. One Greek donor is also mentioned.

In one inscription the donor is described as a monk who had "mastered the five collections *(nikāyas)."* According to another inscription, a laywoman named Avisinā of Maḍalachikaṭa who was well versed in the *sūtras (sūtātikinī)* made a contribution. (This inscription appears twice.) One example of a layman versed in the *sūtras (suttantika)* is also recorded. Two inscriptions describe the donors (one layman, one monk) as reciters *(bhāṇaka)*. Although the schools of Nikāya Buddhism must have existed at the time when Sāñcī and Bhārhut were being estab-

lished, it is noteworthy that not a single reference to any of these schools appears in the inscriptions from the two sites.

Near Sāñcī are two sets of *stūpas,* the Andher and Bhojpur *stūpas,* which are usually grouped together with the Bhīlsa Topes. Reliquaries and inscriptions have been discovered at the three Andher *stūpas,* located in a small village to the southwest of Bhīlsa. The names "Mogaliputa" and "Hāritīputa" appear in the inscriptions.

Besides Sāñcī and Bhārhut, another important site in central India is found at Buddhagayā, the place where Śākyamuni Buddha attained enlightenment. A *caitya* (memorial mound) was constructed at this site at an early date. During the Śuṅga dynasty, a magnificent balustrade was built around the site of the Buddha's enlightenment, but only remains of it survive today. The center of this sacred site is the "adamantine throne" at the foot of the *bodhi*-tree where Śākyamuni was seated at the time of his enlightenment. During the Gupta dynasty the great *stūpa* of Buddhagayā was erected. (The great *stūpa* found there today is a restoration done at a later date.) The oldest surviving structure at the site today is a part of its balustrade. Traditional accounts maintained that it dated back to the time of Aśoka, but recent research has revealed that it was built after Bhārhut had been constructed. Among the carvings on the balustrade are five that probably concern the biography of the Buddha and two that are related to the *Jātakas.*

Several other important sites exist in central India. Part of an old balustrade was unearthed at Pāṭaliputra, suggesting the magnificence of the temples established by Aśoka at the Aśokārāma. Many other temples and *stūpas* must have existed in central India, but little remains to be seen today. However, a stone pillar erected at the order of King Aśoka and inscriptions in Brāhmī script dating from the second century B.C.E. were discovered at Sārnāth, the site of the Buddha's first sermon. The inscription on the capstone for a balustrade notes that it was contributed by the nun Saṃvahikā. A *stūpa* must also have existed at the Aśokārāma. Discovery of a Buddhist site from the Śuṅga dynasty was also made at Lauriyā Nandangaṛh in Bihar. Apparently a large *stūpa* existed there, but no inscriptions have been found.

The Kāṇva Dynasty

The ninth king of the Śuṅga dynasty, Devabhūti, ruled ten years until approximately 70 B.C.E., when he was assassinated at the instigation of his minister Vasudeva. The Kāṇva dynasty, founded by Vasudeva,

lasted forty-five years and ruled the Ganges River basin. It was a weak dynasty, however, and during the rule of its fourth king was conquered by the Āndhran dynasty from the south. The Magadha region subsequently fell under the rule of the Andhra dynasty for a long period.

The Macedonian Kings of Northwestern India

From approximately 180 B.C.E., when the strength of the Mauryan Empire was already on the wane, a series of foreign peoples began invading northwestern India, which was thereafter dominated by foreign armies for a long time. The first of these foreign invaders were the Greeks, called *"yavana"* in Sanskrit and *"yona"* in Pāli, both terms that were probably based on the place name "Ionia."

Alexander the Great invaded India in 327 B.C.E., spreading Greek culture and customs, but had been repulsed by Candragupta (r. ca. 321-297 B.C.E.), the founder of the Mauryan dynasty. After Alexander's death, only western India continued under Macedonian rule. Seleucus I, founder of the Seleucid dynasty, dispatched a Greek named Megasthenes to serve as his envoy in Candragupta's court at Pāṭaliputra in central India. Megasthenes was stationed in Pāṭaliputra from ca. 303 to 292 B.C.E. and wrote a record of his experiences there that became famous. By about the middle of the third century B.C.E., Bactria (modern Balkh, the area between the Oxus and Indus rivers in northern Afghanistan) and Parthia had gained their independence from Seleucid rule. From the third century B.C.E. to the middle of the second century B.C.E., another Seleucid king, Antiochus III of Syria, and the fourth king of Bactria, Demetrios, invaded India. They occupied northern India and advanced into central India. In the first century B.C.E. King Maues of the Śaka people invaded India and ended the rule of Macedonian kings in northwestern India.

Of the Macedonian kings recorded in Indian history, Menandros (known in Indian languages as Milinda) is particularly important. Menandros invaded India and ruled an area extending from central India to Afghanistan from approximately 160 to 140 B.C.E. The capital of his empire was Śākala.

Menandros is thought to have held a number of debates with a Buddhist monk, Nāgasena, and to have been converted to Buddhism. The contents of their talks were collected and compiled into the *Milindapañha* or *Questions of King Milinda*. The Pāli text of this work includes a number of additions by later authors; however, the earliest part of the text can be determined by comparing the Pāli text with the Chinese translation,

the *Na-hsien pi-ch'iu ching* (*T* 1670a). Those parts found in both versions constitute the oldest elements of the work and offer a fascinating view of certain aspects of Indian Buddhism during the first and second centuries B.C.E. No elements of Mahāyāna Buddhism are included in the work, which shows Buddhist doctrine in the transitional period between the *Āgamas* and the development of *abhidharma* literature.

In 1937 a reliquary was discovered at Shinkot in the Swat River Valley in the upper reaches of the Indus River. According to the inscription on it, the remains were enshrined in the reliquary during the reign of King Milinda (or Minadra, according to the inscription), providing additional evidence that Buddhism was followed in northern India during the time of Milinda.

During Aśoka's reign, Majjhantika was sent as an emissary to northwestern India to establish a Buddhist order there. Although much of the early history of this area is not known, it is clear that the Sarvāstivādin School became the dominant Buddhist school in Kashmir and Gandhāra. The remains of many Buddhist *stūpas* have been discovered in northwestern India, indicating that Buddhism was flourishing in this area by the second century B.C.E. One of the most important of these finds is the Dharmarājikā *stūpa* discovered at Taxila. The oldest part of the *stūpa* dates from the time of King Aśoka. The ruins in the area reveal that the Dharmarājikā *stūpa* was huge, surrounded by lodgings for believers, and undoubtedly one of the major Buddhist centers in North India for a long time. A roll of thin silver plate was discovered in one of the old halls near the *stūpa* in 1914. According to the inscription on it, a Bactrian named Urasaka had enshrined a relic of the Buddha in a hall he had built that was dedicated to a bodhisattva. The inscription is late, dating from the middle of the first century C.E., but many Buddhist antiquities excavated at Sirkap in Taxila are much older; the oldest dates from the second century B.C.E.

Inscriptions have been found indicating that a number of Greeks had converted to Buddhism by the first century B.C.E. According to an inscription on a reliquary urn found in the Swat Valley, the urn contained a relic of Śākyamuni Buddha and had been installed there by a Greek governor *(meridarkh)* named Theodoros. A copper plate found at the same site records that the *stūpa* was built by the *meridarkh* and his wife. The term *"meridarkh"* refers to an office in the Greek administrative system. Although it may be translated as "governor," the *meridarkh* probably did not govern a very large territory. The significant fact, however, is that Buddhist believers devout enough to commission *stūpas* could be found among this class of officials.

Greek Buddhists were found even in Aśoka's time. Among the Bud-

dhist missionaries dispatched by Aśoka was a Greek named Dham-
marakkhita, who went to Aparāntaka to spread Buddhism. Greek
donors are also mentioned in the inscriptions at Sāñcī, suggesting that
some Greeks must have converted to Buddhism soon after their arrival
in India.

Buddhism was a rational and moral religion, easily adopted by for-
eign peoples. Greeks could readily respond to the Buddha's teachings
and worship at Buddhist *stūpas*. In contrast, Brahmanism and Hindu-
ism included much folk religion. They were based on a caste system
that, according to the *Laws of Manu,* regarded foreigners as *mleccha*
(impure barbarians). Consequently, few foreigners adopted Hinduism.
Buddhism, with its emphasis on doctrine and reason, was much more
attractive to foreigners. Moreover, according to Buddhist teachings, all
castes were fundamentally equal, and foreigners were not discriminated
against. Not only the Greeks, but the foreign invaders of India who fol-
lowed them, including the Śakas, Parthians, and Kuṣānas, often
became supporters of Buddhism.

The Śaka Invasion

The Śaka people are referred to as the *sai-chung* in the Chinese dynastic
history, the *Han shu.* At one time they had lived near the Ili River in
Central Asia, but around 180 B.C.E. they were forced by the Uighurs to
move west. The Śakas eventually destroyed the Macedonian state in
Bactria and made that their base. However, the Hsiung-nu later pushed
the Uighurs further west, and the Uighurs in turn conquered Bactria
(Ch. Ta-hsia). The Śaka, forced to move south, invaded India. Around
100 B.C.E. Maues became the first Śaka king. He conquered northern
India and was on an expedition to conquer Mathurā when he died.
Maues had called himself "the king of kings," but after his death the
Śaka people broke apart into smaller groups. The various areas they
had conquered were each ruled in a semiautonomous fashion by gover-
nor-generals called *kṣatrapa* or *mahākṣatrapa.* Particularly important were
Kusuluka and his son Patika, who ruled in North India, and Rajula,
who ruled in Mathurā.

The Śaka rulers patronized Buddhism. According to a copper plate
found at the *stūpa* at Taxila, which dates from the first century B.C.E.,
Patika built *stūpas* in areas where none had existed and installed the rel-
ics of Śākyamuni Buddha in them. He is also credited with the estab-
lishment of monasteries. According to the inscription on a pillar topped
by lions found at Mathurā, Ayasia Kamuïa, the wife of the *mahākṣatrapa*

Rajula, along with her relatives and the women in the palace, commissioned the building of a *stūpa* with a relic of Śākyamuni Buddha. They also built monasteries and gave alms to the Sarvāstivādin School. Rajula's son, Śuḍasa, gave land for the support of cave-temples to two monks of the Sarvāstivādin School, Buddhadeva and Budhila. This inscription, which dates from about 10 B.C.E., includes the earliest mention of the name of a school of Nikāya Buddhism.

Parthia

Parthia was originally located southeast of the Caspian Sea. In the third century B.C.E. Arsakes rebelled against the king of Syria and established the Parthian kingdom. The Chinese have traditionally called the Parthians *"an-hsi,"* a transliteration of Arsakes. The Parthians extended their borders at the expense of the Greeks, and later during the reign of King Azes invaded India. The next king, Gondopharnes, lived around the beginning of the common era and ruled in northwestern India. By the end of the first century C.E., the Parthians had replaced the Śakas as rulers of northwestern India; shortly afterward, the Kuṣāṇa dynasty replaced the Parthians as the conquerors of northwestern India.

The Parthians were Buddhist. A number of Parthian monks played important roles in carrying Buddhism to China. For example, An Shih-kao (the character *"an"* was taken from the term *"an-hsi"* or Parthia and was used as an ethnikon indicating the monk's Parthian nationality) was a prince from Parthia. He became a Buddhist monk, studied *abhidharma,* and mastered a number of meditation techniques. After he arrived in China during the reign of Emperor Huan (r. 146–167) of the Later Han, he translated many works from the *Āgamas* and *abhidharma* literature. Several decades later, during the reign of Emperor Ling (r. 168–189), another Parthian, An Hsüan, traveled to China. In the middle of the third century a Parthian named T'an-ti is reported in China.

Kuṣāṇa Dynasty

The Kuṣāṇas, known to the Chinese as the "Ta-yüeh-chih" or Uighurs, were originally in Central Asia between Tun-huang and Ch'i-lian; they moved west after they were defeated by the Hsiung-nu in the second century B.C.E. For a time they settled to the north of the Oxus River, but then moved on to defeat the Ta-hsia. By around 129 B.C.E. they had advanced into the former kingdom of Bactria. At that time

there were five tribes of Uighurs, the strongest being the Kuṣāṇas. They added to their power when they brought the other four tribes under their control. In the last half of the first century C.E., they conquered Parthia and invaded India under their leader, Kujūla Kadphises. He was succeeded by Wema Kadphises. In the first half of the second century C.E., he was followed by the famous King Kaniṣka, who had seized power from the Kadphises' lineage. Kaniṣka created an empire that stretched from Central Asia into Afghanistan and included the northwestern and northern parts of India.

Kaniṣka's empire was the largest in South Asia since Aśoka's time. It encompassed peoples of many races including Indians, Greeks, Śakas, and Parthians. Moreover, the Kuṣāṇa Empire occupied a key position on the trade routes between the Roman Empire, India, and China. The cultures of the various peoples living under Kuṣāṇa rule combined with the stimulus provided by East-West trade produced a dynamic new society and culture in North India. A new movement in Buddhism, the Mahāyāna tradition, developed impressively under Kuṣāṇa rule. In addition, Buddhism was stimulated by Greek and Greco-Roman culture to produce new forms of architecture and carving. The art of Gandhāra, for example, was noticeably influenced by the Greeks. Buddhist temples began to appear with Corinthian columns and capitals, as well as Greek decorative patterns. Greek influence eventually even reached Japan by way of Central Asia and China. The architecture of the Horyūji Temple in Nara, Japan, clearly reflects Greek influence.

During this period, Buddhist carving advanced. Sculptures were strongly influenced by Greek sculpture, as is evident from the Greek style of the facial expressions and clothing, particularly the folds of the cloth, portrayed in the carvings. The influence of Greco-Roman art on Buddhist architecture and sculpture of human figures was already evident in the Parthian period. Images of the Buddha himself, however, were not produced at this time. They first appeared in Gandhāra (in the northern part of modern Pakistan) and in Mathurā in central India during the last half of the first century C.E., the early part of the Kuṣāṇa dynasty. During the second century C.E. Buddhist sculpture proliferated.

The Buddha was first portrayed in sculpture in the context of reliefs depicting his biography and earlier lives. These reliefs were used to ornament Buddhist *stūpas* and Buddhist architecture at such sites as Bharhut and Sāñcī in central India. In these early reliefs, however, the Buddha was only symbolized, not represented with a human figure. Only with the emergence of Gandhāran art was the Buddha portrayed in human form. At first, he was depicted as being approximately the

same size as the other figures in the reliefs even though he was the central figure. Later, however, the figure of the Buddha was made larger than the other figures. Finally, he was removed from the biographical scenes, and independent images of the Buddha were sculpted.

Independent images of the Buddha served as objects of worship and consequently had a different function from the Buddha portrayed in reliefs depicting his biography. Such objects of worship may have been developed by those who were carving reliefs depicting the Buddha's biography in response to the *stūpa* worship cults. Buddhist biographical literature also may have played a role in these developments. Whether the portrayal of the Buddha in human form was due to the influence of Greek sculptors or whether it was the result of inevitable developments in Buddhist doctrine remains a question. If it were due to developments in Buddhist doctrine, then it probably had its roots in *stūpa* worship and lay beliefs in the Buddha's power to save people. According to Nikāya Buddhist doctrine, which was formulated by monks, when the Buddha died he entered into "*nirvāṇa* without remainder" and thus abandoned his physical body. Since he could no longer be seen, he could not be portrayed with any form, human or otherwise.

The beliefs of Kujūla Kadphises and Wema Kadphises are not clearly known; but during their reigns, Buddhism appears to have flourished in northern India, where many Buddhist ruins have been found, including the Dharmarajikā *stūpa* at Taxila, the Kuṇāla *stūpa,* and the ruins at Kalawān. Many discoveries at these sites date from the Kuṣāṇa period. The ruins at Kalawān include the largest monastery found in northern India. An inscription from a *caitya* hall from the site includes the date "the 134th year of Azes," which corresponds to 77 C.E. The inscription records the enshrinement of relics in the *caitya* hall and their presentation to the Sarvāstivādin School, the earliest mention in northern India of a school of Nikāya Buddhism.

Among the later inscriptions, which date from the second century C.E. on, is one found near Peshawar in northern Pakistan. There King Kaniṣka established the famous great *stūpa* of Kaniṣka, the ruins of which were excavated at Shāh-jī-kī Ḍherī. An urn for relics was discovered that had been enshrined at the Kaniṣka-vihāra (monastery). The inscription on the urn clearly states that the Kaniṣka-vihāra belonged to the Sarvāstivādin School. An inscription dated 148 C.E. on a small copper *stūpa* from Kurram near Peshawar records the enshrinement of the Buddha's relics and their donation to the Sarvāstivādin School.

Among the other inscriptions from northern India that include the names of schools is one mentioning the construction of a water supply and another recording the excavation of a well, both for the Sarvāstivā-

dins. According to other inscriptions, a copper ladle was given to
Kāśyapīya School and earthen jars to the Bahuśrutīya and Kāśyapīya
schools. These inscriptions date from approximately the second cen-
tury C.E.

The Sarvāstivādin School was particularly strong in northern India.
But many inscriptions concerning the building of *stūpas* in northern
India do not mention the name of any of the schools of Nikāya Bud-
dhism. For example, an inscription records the enshrinement of relics
by two Greek *meridarkhs* (governors). The Śaka governor Patika had rel-
ics enshrined and *stūpas* built at various sites including Kshema at Tax-
ila, but these *stūpas* apparently were not given to any particular school.
These inscriptions were dated approximately the first century C.E. Most
of the inscriptions concerning *stūpas* were similar to these and did not
include the name of any of the schools of Nikāya Buddhism.[2]

Buddhist sites have also been found in Afghanistan. The discovery of
Aśokan inscriptions at Lampāka and Kandahār proved that Buddhism
was being spread in these areas by the time of King Aśoka. The subse-
quent history of Buddhist proselytization in these areas is not known in
detail, but by the beginning of the common era Buddhism was flourish-
ing. In modern times many Buddhist archeological sites have been
excavated in Afghanistan, including the remains of the castle town of
Bergrām, the *stūpas* at Bīmarān, and the ruins from Haḍḍa and Sho-
torak. Further to the west are the cave-temples of Bāmiyān, within
which are two very large stone Buddhas and some murals. Bergrām has
been identified as the ancient site of Kāpiśī. Illustrations of the Bud-
dha's biography and other antiquities have been found at this site. A
reliquary was discovered in an ancient *stūpa* at Bīmarān. According to
an inscription on it, a man named Śīvarakṣita built a *stūpa* to enshrine
the relics of the Buddha during the Śaka period.

Many artifacts have also been found at Haḍḍa. According to an
inscription on a water vase, it had been placed in a *stūpa* for the Bud-
dha's relics during the Kuṣāṇa dynasty. A bronze reliquary was found
at Wardak, to the west of Kabul. On it was an inscription stating that
the Buddha's relics had been enshrined within the Vagramarega Mon-
astery and that they had been given to the Mahāsaṅghika School. A
wish for King Huviṣka's good fortune was also expressed in the inscrip-
tion, which was dated the fifty-first year of the era, a date corresponding
to 179 C.E. during the Kuṣāṇa period. Although many inscriptions have
been discovered in both northern India and Afghanistan, only a few
include the names of the schools of Nikāya Buddhism.

Kaniṣka's support for the Sarvāstivādin School is clearly manifested
in the inscription found at the great *stūpa* of Kaniṣka. His support is also

the subject of a number of legends. For example, according to the *Maming p'u-sa chuan* (*T* 2046), a biography of Aśvaghoṣa, when Kaniṣka attacked central India, he demanded the Buddha's begging bowl and Aśvaghoṣa as compensation. In response to the king's request, Aśvaghoṣa went to northwestern India and spread Buddhism there. Kaniṣka also paid homage to Pārśva of the Sarvāstivādin School, and at Pārśva's recommendation assembled five hundred *arhats* and convened a council. This council is commonly called the Fourth Council. The huge two-hundred-fascicle *Mahāvibhāṣā* (*T* 1545) is said to have been compiled as a result of this council.

Kaniṣka was succeeded by Vāsiṣka, Huviṣka, and Vāsudeva. The strength of the dynasty gradually waned, and by the end of the third century, it occupied only a small part of northern India. Buddhism continued to flourish in northern India during this period. Earlier in Mathurā, a governor *(kṣatrapa)* named Śuḍasa had established the Guha-vihāra (monastery). Later during the Kuṣāṇa dynasty, in the forty-seventh year of the epoch that began with Kaniṣka, King Huviṣka had the Huviṣka-vihāra constructed at Jamālpur on the outskirts of Mathurā. It was decorated with beautiful carvings. These were destroyed by non-Buddhists, however, and today the monastery is in ruins. Many fragments of fences, pillars, and Buddhist images have been found in the ruins. Many other temples also were located at Mathurā. Inscriptions found around Mathurā indicate that a number of the schools of Nikāya Buddhism had monasteries there, including the Mahāsaṅghika (mentioned in six inscriptions), Sarvāstivāda (two inscriptions), Sammatīya (one inscription), and Dharmaguptaka (one inscription). Many other inscriptions that do not include the names of any of the schools have also been found. Mathurā's status as a major Buddhist center is confirmed by passages in the travel diaries of Fa-hsien and Hsüan-tsang.

Mathurā and Gandhāra are famous as the two sites where the Buddha was first portrayed in human form in sculpture. The first images were made at Mathurā at approximately the same time they first appeared at Gandhāra. However, the images from Mathurā, which had long been an advanced center of plastic arts, are not copies of those from Gandhāra and are done in a different style, indicating that the images at the two sites were probably created independently.[3] Perhaps the artists of Mathurā were stimulated by the appearance of the Gandhāran images of the Buddha to sculpt images in their own style. Few examples of Mathurān treatments of the Buddha's biography have been found, but many portrayals of people honoring the Buddha have been found among the Mathurān artifacts. In early examples, the object of

worship is the *bodhi*-tree or a *stūpa*. Later these objects were replaced with a human figure of the Buddha, and finally, figures of various bodhisattvas and Buddhas were made. In the dedicatory inscriptions on the Mathurān statues of the Buddha, the carvings themselves are sometimes referred to simply as "images" *(pratimā)* rather than as "images of the Buddha." Identical images are referred to in some inscriptions as "a seated image of a bodhisattva" but in others as "a seated image of the Buddha." The variety in terms used to refer to the carvings probably indicates differences in their use. However, the doctrinal reasons underlying such distinctions in terminology remain unclear.

The Āndhran Dynasties

The Āndhran dynasties are divided into two periods. During the first, the Sātavāhana royal house ruled the Deccan peninsula. The second period consists of the decline of the Sātavāhana royal house and the emergence of a number of local kings, each of whom defended his own territory.

With the decline of Mauryan power around 200 B.C.E., the Sātavāhana family, which came from the western part of the Deccan, increased their influence. Their power, which lasted until the third century C.E., was based on an area with Paithan (Prastiṣṭhāna), the southern terminus of the Southern Route, at its center; but they seem to have come from an area that included Nāsik and Akolā to the north. By the second century C.E., the Sātavāhana dynasty was at its height; it extended to a large area to the south of the Vindhya Mountains and the Narmadā River, which served as the natural boundaries between central and southern India. For a time, the Sātavāhanas even extended their rule north of the Narmadā River. The capital of their kingdom was at Dhānyakaṭaka, on the eastern seacoast near the banks of the Kṛṣṇā River.

Traditionally, the Sātavāhana royal family is said to have ruled for 460 years and to have produced thirty kings. A number of these "kings," however, were the heads of branches of the family. It is probably more accurate to say that the Sātavāhana family ruled for approximately 300 years with seventeen to nineteen kings reigning during this period. By the third century C.E. the Sātavāhana family had lost its power and the Deccan was ruled by a number of different families, each controlling a small area. During this period the Ikṣvāku royal family established itself in the region around the lower reaches of the Godāvarī River. It was a strong supporter of Buddhism. By the fourth century the Gupta dynasty had united India.

Cave-temples

One of the major distinguishing features of Buddhism in the Deccan is the cave-temples found in the area, especially in the Ghats, the mountain range along the west coast. Approximately twelve hundred cave-temples have been found in India; seventy-five percent of them are Buddhist, with the oldest dating from the first or second century B.C.E. The excavation of cave-temples reached its peak during the next several centuries.

Rocky mountains, barren of trees, are found throughout the Deccan. Since there was not enough wood to build monasteries, they were carved out of rock. In these mountainous areas, monasteries and *stūpas* were constructed in large caves instead of on level ground as in other parts of India. Cave-temples, because they were constructed out of long-lasting material, provide significant information about monastery life in ancient India. The most famous cave-temples are found at Ajantā, Bhājā, Nāsik, Kārlī, and Ellora. Two types of caves are found at these sites: caves used for worship, which contained a *stūpa,* and caves used as quarters for monks.

The caves used for worship are called *cetiyaghara.* The *stūpas* found in them are made of stone and are much smaller than those found above the ground. A complex of cells for monks *(vihāra)* usually encircled a large rectangular chamber. The entrance to the complex was on one wall. Entryways to a number of cells *(layana),* each serving as the residence of one or two monks, were found on the other three walls of the central chamber. One particularly large *vihāra* at Ellora consists of three stories with a total of more than a hundred cells for monks. The large central chamber was used for events such as the fortnightly assembly *(uposatha),* at which the precepts were recited. The entryways and the pillars in the *cetiyagharas* were often elaborately carved, while the *vihāras* were usually plain. However, the *vihāras* at Ajantā and Ellora are carved. The wall paintings at Ajantā are particularly famous.

Nāsik is a city to the west of Ajantā and Ellora. The cave-temples in this area are midway up the slope of mountains outside the city. There are a total of twenty-three cave-temples with the oldest dating from the second century B.C.E. An inscription in the fourteenth cave records that it was commissioned by a high official who lived in Nāsik during the reign of King Kaṇha. This king has been identified as King Kṛṣṇa, who was the second ruler of the Āndhran dynasties and the younger brother of Simuka, the first king of the Śātavāhana dynasty. If this is correct, the cave would have been excavated during the first half of the second century B.C.E. The style of the letters of the inscriptions in the *stūpa* hall of

the thirteenth cave indicates that they date from the second century
B.C.E. According to this inscription, the village of Dhaṃbika raised the
funds for the cave.

Despite all of this Buddhist activity, the Āndhran dynasties generally
supported Brahmanism, probably because the performance of horse
sacrifices and other rituals resulted in great prestige for the rulers. In
the first or second century C.E., Nāsik was occupied by the Kṣaharāta
family of the Śakas. According to two inscriptions in the eighth cave,
the Kṣaharāta governor *(kṣatrapa)* Uṣavadāta contributed both money
and land to Buddhists. Uṣavadāta's name also appears in a cave at
Kārlī. Other records of Śaka contributions are found in the eighth and
seventeenth caves.

At the beginning of the third century, Nāsik was recaptured by the
Śātavāhanas. According to an inscription in the third cave, Gotamīpu-
tra Śrī Śātakaruṇi crushed the Kṣaharātas and defeated the Greeks,
Śakas, and Pallavas while conquering a large area. In the third cave at
Nāsik his name appears twice as a donor of land and caves. Śrī Pulu-
māyi, also of the Śātavāhanas, is listed as a contributor to the cave-tem-
ples in another inscription from the third cave. A further inscription in
this third cave reports that the cave was given to the order of monks of
the "Bhadāvaniya" (Bhadrayānika or Bhadrayānīya) School by the
empress dowager of Gotamīputra, and an additional inscription states
that Śrī Pulumāyi, the direct successor of Gotamīputra, gave land to the
monks of the Bhadrayānīya School. A number of other caves, including
the sixth, tenth, and fifteenth, were given to the universal *saṅgha*. The
recipients of many of the other caves are unknown. A Mahāyāna
image, which was added later, is found in the seventeenth cave.

The Bhadrayānīya School is also mentioned in the cave-temple com-
plex of Kaṇheri near Bombay, which consists of 109 large and small
cave-temples. One of the larger caves at the center of the complex serves
as the *caitya* hall. This central *caitya* was donated to the masters of the
Bhadrayānīya School during the reign of the illustrious King Yajñaśrī in
the latter part of the Śātavāhana dynasty (near the end of the second
century C.E.). The other caves at Kaṇheri were excavated during the
period between the end of the second century C.E. and the eighth cen-
tury. The seventieth cave also was given to the Bhadrayānīya School,
while the twelfth, forty-eighth, seventy-seventh, and eighty-first were
donated to the universal order.

The cave-temples at Kārlī are in the sides of mountains on the road
between Bombay and Poona. These caves are as old as those at Nāsik.
The center of the complex is a large cave with a *caitya* in it 13.87 meters
wide and 37.87 meters long, making it the largest *stūpa* hall in India.

This splendid example of Indian cave-temple architecture was excavated within a century of the beginning of the common era. According to an inscription, it was the gift of a guild *(seṭhi)*. However, the names of individual donors are carved on eleven pillars within the cave. One pillar containing relics was given by a chanter *(bhāṇaka)* of the "Dhammutariya" (Dharmottarīya) School named Sātimita. Nine of the pillars were donated by Greeks. The cave was thus the result of contributions from a variety of sources. According to one inscription in the cave, a governor *(kṣatrapa)* named Usabhadāta of the Kṣaharāta family of the Śakas donated the village of Karajika for the support of all those in the universal order who had gone forth from their homes and were staying at the cave-temple *(pavajitānam cātudisasa sagha)*. The *caitya* cave, consequently, did not belong to any particular school of Nikāya Buddhism.

Later this area was controlled by the Śātavāhana dynasty. Inscriptions from this later period are also found in the *caitya* cave. According to one, the village of Karajika was eventually given to the monks and novices of the Mahāsaṅghika School who were residing in the cave-temples *(pavajitāna bhikhuna nikāyasa Mahāsaghiyāna)*, indicating that the cave-temples were later controlled by the Mahāsaṅghika School. To the north of the *caitya* hall in the quarters for monks is an inscription concerning the donation of a meeting hall *(maṭapo)* with nine rooms to the Mahāsaṅghika School in the twenty-fourth year of the reign of King Śrī Pulumāyi.

The caves at Bhājā are near Kārlī. At their center is a cave that served as a *caitya* hall. It is flanked by caves on either side with cells for monks. None of the caves, including the central one, is very large. The caves date from the first century B.C.E. or earlier and are thus older than those at Kārlī; the seventeenth is the oldest. Eight inscriptions have been found at the caves. Four of these record the names of donors. The remaining four are found on small *stūpas* at the edges of the caves and record the names of the elders whose remains are contained in the *stūpas*. The residents of the caves at Bhājā do not seem to have belonged to any one particular school of Nikāya Buddhism.

Junnār is a town forty-six miles north of Poona. Near the town are five sets of cave-temples with a total of more than 150 large and small cave-temples that were carved between the first century B.C.E. and the second century C.E. Approximately thirty inscriptions have been collected from these caves that concern donations of *stūpa* halls *(cetiyaghara)*, cave-temples *(leṇa)*, water tanks, mango trees, land, and so forth. The majority of the donors were local inhabitants. The *stūpa* hall of the fifty-first cave at Mount Sivanerī in Junnār was contributed by a rich and influential merchant. Three Greek donors and one Śaka are also men-

tioned in other inscriptions. A large meeting-hall was donated by a minister for the Śaka governor Nahapāna (Uṣavadāta's father-in-law), indicating that the Kṣaharāta family of the Śakas controlled a wide area. An inscription at Junnār records the donation of a cave and water tank to the order of nuns of the "Dhammutariya" School. This is the only example of an inscription concerning nuns from the cave-temples, probably because nuns usually lived in towns rather than in caves.

Twenty-eight caves are found at Ajantā. The *stūpa* halls of the ninth and tenth caves and the nearby quarters for monks in the twelfth and thirteenth caves are the oldest, dating from the beginning of the common era. Inscriptions in the *stūpa* hall of the tenth cave and in the quarters for monks of the twelfth cave concern donors. The former was given by relatives of King Pulumāyi and the latter by merchants. The eleventh, fourteenth, and fifteenth caves, all with quarters for monks, were opened next. The rest of the caves were developed after the Gupta period. These later caves, especially the first and second, are famous for their exquisite carvings and beautiful wall paintings.

Ellora, containing thirty-four caves, is near Ajantā. The oldest caves, the first through the twelfth, are Buddhist. The tenth cave is a *stūpa* hall, while the others contain quarters for monks. All were developed during the Gupta period. They are elaborately carved and contain Mahāyāna images, just as the later caves at Ajantā. The thirteenth through the twenty-ninth caves are Hindu; included among them is the Kailāsa temple, famed for the high quality of its carving. The remaining five temples are Jaina.

Stūpas

The ruins of large *stūpas* exist at Amarāvatī and Nāgārjunakoṇḍa in the eastern part of the Deccan. Amarāvatī is on the southern bank of the Kistna (Kṛṣṇā) River about sixty miles from the mouth, just to the east of the old city of Dharanikoṭ (Dhānyakaṭaka). The great *stūpa* at Amarāvatī, with a fifty-meter diameter at its base, was mostly intact when it was discovered in 1797. However, the preceding year, the local ruler had established his new capital at Amarāvatī. The great *stūpa* was subsequently destroyed and used as building materials for the new city. The carved marble panels and fence around the *stūpa* were removed, and the ruins of the *stūpa* were eventually converted into a pond. Some of the marble carvings, however, were saved; today they are in the collections of the British Museum in London and museums in Madras and Calcutta. They suggest the former splendor of Amarāvatī. Tall portals

faced each of the four cardinal directions. The structure was sur-rounded by a walk for circumambulation with a balustrade on the out-side. This magnificent structure was worthy of its name, Mahācetiya (great shrine). The *stūpa* dates back to before the beginning of the com-mon era. In the middle of the second century C.E., it was remodeled to make the imposing structure described above.

Many of the 160 inscriptions from Amarāvatī date from the second and third centuries C.E., but eleven of them are even older. According to one inscription dating from the reign of King Pulumāyi of the Śāta-vāhana dynasty, the children of the merchant Puri commissioned a sculpture of the wheel of the Dharma to present to the large *stūpa* of the Buddha, which was the property of the "Cetiya" (Caitika) School, indi-cating that the great *stūpa* belonged to the Cetiya School in the second century C.E. In other inscriptions from Amarāvatī, the "Cetika" or "Cetiyavadaka" School is mentioned.

In inscriptions recording gifts from laymen, the term "householder" *(gahapati)* was often used to describe the donor. If the donor was a mem-ber of the Buddhist order, then he or she was often called a monk or a nun; but in some inscriptions the donor was called "one who has gone forth from home" *(pavajita)* or a male or female religious mendicant *(samaṇa* or *samaṇika)*. Phrases were also used such as "(donated) by a nun together with her daughters" or "(given) by a woman who has gone forth from her home together with her daughter who has also gone forth." In the last two cases, the inscription probably referred to a daughter born before the woman had entered the order. If such were not the case, then the woman would have given birth while she was a nun. Similar passages are not found in the inscriptions from northern India.

The remains of many Buddhist *stūpas* have been found in the area around the lower reaches of the Kistna River. Particularly important are two very large *stūpas* at Bhaṭṭiprolu and Ghaṇṭaśālā, which have diameters at their bases of 45 and 37 meters, respectively. The large *stūpa* at Bhaṭṭiprolu is very old. The style of the lettering on an inscrip-tion on a small box for relics found inside it dates from the third century B.C.E., indicating that the *stūpa* was probably constructed during the reign of Aśoka. Altogether eleven inscriptions, mostly records of donors, have been found at the *stūpa* at Bhaṭṭiprolu.

Five inscriptions have been discovered at Ghaṇṭaśālā. They date from the third century C.E. and record the names of donors. Among them is an inscription containing a term that seems to indicate that the "Aparaseliya" (Aparaśaila) School was active in the area at this time.

A stone pillar with an inscription has been found at Dhānyakaṭaka

(Dharanikot), the capital of the Śātavāhana dynasty. According to the inscription, a minister gave the pillar, which had a wheel of the Dharma on it, to the order of monks of the "Pubbaseliya" (Pūrvaśaila) School. The pillar was then set up at the eastern gate of a large monastery *(mahāvihāra)*, indicating that the monastery belonged to the Pubbaseliya School at one time.

Nāgārjunakoṇḍa (also known as Nāgārjunikoṇḍa), situated on a plateau on the south bank of the middle reaches of the Kistna River, was the capital for the Ikṣvāku state. Although the name of the site seems to indicate that it had some connection with the great Mahāyāna Buddhist thinker Nāgārjuna (ca. 150–250), the inscriptions found at this site contain no mention of Nāgārjuna. The Ikṣvāku family's power was at its height along the Kistna River during the second and third centuries C.E. Fifty-six inscriptions, many of them long, have been found from among the ruins of the large and small *stūpas,* monasteries, and mortuary temples of Nāgārjunakoṇḍa. One inscription records the gift of a pillar to a large *stūpa (mahācetiya)* by a queen of the Ikṣvāku family named Mahātalavari Cātisiri in the sixth year of the reign of King Siri Virapurisadata. The name of an eminent king of the Ikṣvākus, Vā-tsiṭhiputa Siri Cātamūla, also appears in the above inscription. Altogether ten inscriptions relating the gifts of Queen Mahātalavari Cātisiri have been found at Nāgārjunakoṇḍa. According to one of them the great *stūpa* belonged to the "Aparamahāvinaseliya" School, which may be identical with the Aparaśaila School. Six inscriptions concerning the contributions of other queens have also been discovered. A number of inscriptions record gifts to the Aparamahāvinaseliya School. According to one, Queen Mahātalavari Cātisiri gave a *cetiyaghara* (worship hall) to the school.

Śrīparvata, a mountain on which Nāgārjuna is said to have lived, is at Nāgārjunakoṇḍa and was the site of the Culadhammagiri monastery. An inscription from a worship hall at the monastery records the gift of the hall by elder monks from "Tambapaṃnaka" (Sri Lanka). Because Nāgārjunakoṇḍa had been a port in the middle reaches of the Kistna River, relations had been maintained with Sri Lanka through visits of Sri Lankan monks to the city. An inscription records the presence of a Sri Lankan monastery ("Sīhaḷavihāra") in the area and the gift of a water tank to the Pūrvaśaila School.

An inscription recording the gift of a monastery to monks of the Bahuśrutīya School was found approximately four hundred meters from the great *stūpa* at Nāgārjunakoṇḍa. Inscriptions were found in another area recording the construction of a monastery and the erection

of pillars for the universal order on land belonging to the Mahīśāsaka School. According to another inscription, a stone carved with the footprints of the Buddha was enshrined at a monastery belonging to the Mahāvihāravāsin sect (a Sri Lankan order) of the Vibhajyavāda. The frequent appearance of the names of these schools at Nāgārjunakoṇḍa indicates that as time passed, monasteries increasingly were controlled by individual schools.

The names of donors outside the Ikṣvāku family appear in the dedicatory inscriptions from Nāgārjunakoṇḍa, but the major donors were clearly the queens of the Ikṣvāku family. The great *stūpa* was probably built through their efforts. The ruins at Nāgārjunakoṇḍa were discovered in 1926 and subsequently yielded many inscriptions and fragments of carvings. In recent years, however, the Kistna River has been dammed below Nāgārjunakoṇḍa to produce hydroelectric power, submerging the ruins beneath the waters of the man-made Nāgārjuna Lake. The discovery of a container said to hold the remains of Nāgārjuna's disciple Āryadeva was reported from Naṇḍūra, near Nāgārjunakoṇḍa, but doubts remain about the correct interpretation of the inscription.

The Mahāyāna Order and Archeological Evidence

The archeological evidence concerning the development of the Buddhist order after the Mauryan Empire has been surveyed in the preceding pages. Modern scholars have been puzzled, however, by the absence of any inscriptions regarding the Early Mahāyāna order. Even though many inscriptions referring to donations to the schools of Nikāya Buddhism have been found, no similar inscriptions about the Early Mahāyāna orders have been discovered. Some scholars have argued that the absence of such archeological evidence indicates that Mahāyāna orders did not exist yet. Other scholars have suggested that Mahāyāna Buddhists were probably considered to be heretics and that Mahāyāna Buddhism most likely began as an underground movement suppressed by the more established forms of Buddhism. Consequently, open expression of support for Mahāyāna Buddhism, such as inscriptions, did not appear until later.

The term "Mahāyāna" does not appear in an inscription until the second or third century C.E., yet the dates at which Mahāyāna texts were translated into Chinese prove that Mahāyāna texts existed in North India during the Kuṣāṇa dynasty. (These early texts are dis-

cussed in the next chapter.) Clearly, the absence of Mahāyāna inscriptions does not prove that Mahāyāna Buddhism did not exist during the first few centuries of the common era.

The Chinese pilgrim Fa-hsien, who left Ch'ang-an for India in 399, described three types of temples that he found on his journey: Hīnayāna temples, Mahāyāna temples, and temples in which both Hīnayāna and Mahāyāna Buddhism were practiced. Later, Hsüan-tsang, who left China for India in 629, described Indian Buddhism in more detail, mentioning the same three types of monasteries.[4] Of the temples Hsüan-tsang visited, sixty percent were Hīnayāna, twenty-four percent were Mahāyāna, and fifteen percent were temples where both Hīnayāna and Mahāyāna were practiced. Even if Hsüan-tsang's figures for both Mahāyāna and mixed (Hīnayāna and Mahāyāna) monasteries are combined, they total only forty percent. Although the Mahāyāna tradition was not the dominant form of Buddhism in India at this time, then, it was clearly present. Since the descriptions of Indian Buddhism by both Fa-hsien and Hsüan-tsang generally agree, these accounts probably accurately portray the state of Indian Buddhism for their respective periods. If a significant number of Mahāyāna temples existed by 400 C.E., when Fa-hsien visited India, it is likely that at least a few existed one or two centuries earlier. Thus, the absence of inscriptions concerning Mahāyāna orders from the second and third centuries is not sufficient evidence to argue that no Mahāyāna order existed at that time. Moreover, the doctrinal development of the Chinese translations of early Mahāyāna texts from the second century C.E. discussed in the next chapter indicates the existence of a Mahāyāna order.

The state of Mahāyāna orders during the first few centuries of the common era can be investigated from other perspectives. First, the names of the schools of Nikāya Buddhism are not found in stone inscriptions until the schools had already existed for a long time. For example, the schools are not mentioned in inscriptions dating from the first or second century B.C.E., such as those from Sāñcī and Bhārhut. Nor are the schools mentioned in inscriptions from cave-temples that were opened before the beginning of the common era, such as those at Nāsik, Kārlī, and Bhājā. The earliest mention of a school is found on the inscription of a pillar with a lion-capital that was discovered at Mathurā. This inscription records the contribution of a *stūpa* and monastery to the entire Sarvāstivādin order. (In other words, the gift was not limited to the monks of a particular Sarvāstivādin monastery.) The Mahāsaṅghika School is also mentioned. The name of Governor-general Rajula in the inscription has enabled scholars to date it to approximately 10 B.C.E.

Mathurā was opened to Buddhism only after Buddhism had spread throughout central India. Later, the Sarvāstivādins were active in Mathurā for a considerable period. Mathurā was the birthplace of Upagupta, a teacher of Aśoka and an important figure in the lineages recorded in sources from the Northern tradition. Consequently, the discovery of inscriptions concerning the Sarvāstivādin School at Mathurā is not surprising. The date of the inscription, the earliest one mentioning a school of Nikāya Buddhism, seems late, however, particularly when it is considered in light of the schisms that had already occurred in Buddhism. If the Buddha died in 484 B.C.E., as is commonly held by Western scholars, then some of the later schisms of Nikāya Buddhism would have occurred during the reign of Aśoka, and the Sarvāstivādin School would have existed since the third century B.C.E. If Ui Hakuju's date of 386 B.C.E. for the Buddha's death is accepted, then the Sarvāstivādin School would have existed since the second century B.C.E. Whichever date is correct, 10 C.E. is surprisingly late for the first reference of a school of Nikāya Buddhism in an inscription.

The situation is similar when inscriptions from northern India are considered. An inscription from Shinkot dating from the time of King Milinda records only the enshrinement of relics. Similar passages from a *stūpa* at Dharmarājika and from an inscription recording the establishment of a *stūpa* by a *meridarkh* (governor) also include no mention of schools. The earliest inscription from a *stūpa* mentioning the name of a school was found on a copper plaque at Kalawān and is dated 77 C.E. It records the presentation of a building to house a *stūpa* to the Sarvāstivādin School. The next earliest inscriptions mentioning the names of schools of Nikāya Buddhism date from the second century C.E. Particularly famous are an inscription on a reliquary discovered at the great *stūpa* of Kaniṣka and another inscription on a *stūpa*-shaped copper reliquary found at Kurram. Both inscriptions date from the second century and concern donations to the Sarvāstivādin School. A second-century inscription on a reliquary found at Wardak records the gift of a temple to the Mahāsaṅghika School. Many other inscriptions from such places as Mathurā, Nāsik, Kārlī, Amarāvatī, and Nāgārjunakoṇḍa record contributions to the schools of Nikāya Buddhism.[5] These inscriptions date from the second and third centuries C.E. However, *stūpas* existed at sites such as Nāsik, Kārlī, and Bhaṭṭiprolu as early as the second century B.C.E. Many inscriptions exist that record contributions to these *stūpas,* but they include no mention of schools. In fact, the names of Nikāya schools are mentioned in only a small proportion of all the inscriptions.

As has been argued elsewhere in this study, Buddhist *stūpas* criginally

were not affiliated with the Nikāya Buddhist orders. In approximately the first century C.E. *stūpas* belonging to these schools began to appear. However, their numbers were far fewer than those *stūpas* not affiliated with Nikāya schools. Early Mahāyānists might well have used the *stūpas* that were not affiliated with the Nikāya schools as bases for proselytizing. The doctrinal reasons for this state of affairs are explained in chapter sixteen.

Mahāyāna Texts Composed during the Kuṣāṇa Dynasty

THE EXAMINATION of inscriptions in the previous chapter did not provide sufficient evidence to prove that a Mahāyāna order existed before the third century of the common era. However, the inscriptions did indicate that many *stūpas* were not affiliated with any particular Hīnayāna school. In the next chapter, the people who lived and practiced their religion around these *stūpas* will be discussed. In this chapter, the existence of Mahāyāna texts in northern India at the beginning of the common era will be established.[1] Through an investigation of the contents of those texts, the nature of Mahāyāna Buddhism at the beginning of the common era will be determined. Since Mahāyāna *sūtras* claim to be the words of the Buddha, the date and circumstances of their emergence cannot be determined directly from statements in the *sūtras* themselves. However, this problem can be examined by working backward from dated Chinese translations of early Mahāyāna texts.

The Translations of Lokakṣema

According to a famous legend, the first transmission of Buddhism to China occurred when Emperor Ming (r. 57–75) of the Later Han dreamed about a golden man. When he subsequently sent emissaries to the Uighurs to inquire about the dream in 67 C.E., they returned to Lo-yang with two missionaries, Chia-she-mo-t'eng (Kāśyapa Mātaṅga?) and Chu Fa-lan (Dharmaratna?). These two men are said to have translated a text into Chinese under the title of *Ssu-shih-erh chang ching*

(*Sūtra in Forty-two Sections*, *T* 784). An examination of this work, however, reveals that it is composed of excerpts from *sūtras* that were translated at a later date. Consequently, the legend of Emperor Ming's dream cannot be recognized as fact.

Although the first transmissions of Buddhism to China probably did occur around the beginning of the common era, Buddhist works were not translated into Chinese until approximately one century later. During the reigns of Emperors Huan (r. 146–167) and Ling (r. 167–189), the Parthian monk An Shih-kao came to China and translated thirty-four Hīnayāna works in forty fascicles including the *An-pan shou-i ching* (*T* 602). Shortly afterward, Chih Lou-chia-ch'an (Lokakṣema?), a monk of Kuṣāṇa, came to China and translated fourteen works in twenty-seven fascicles, including the *Tao-hsing pan-jo ching* (*T* 224, *Aṣṭa-sāhasrikā-PP**). Although several scholarly problems exist concerning the works he translated, modern scholars agree that twelve of the fourteen works Lokakṣema is said to have translated are authentic.[2] Lokakṣema was actively engaged in translation during the Kuang-ho (178–183) and Chung-p'ing (184-198) eras. Since he arrived in China earlier, the original texts on which his translations were based can be traced to the Kuṣāṇa empire sometime before 150 C.E. Determining how far before 150 C.E. the texts can be dated remains a difficult problem.

Among the works translated by Lokakṣema are the *Tao-hsing pan-jo ching* (*T* 224, 10 fasc., *Aṣṭasāhasrikā-PP**), *Pan-chou san-mei ching* (*T* 418?, 1 fasc., *Bhadrapālasūtra*), *Shou-leng-yen san-mei ching* (not extant, 2 fasc., *Śūraṅgamasamādhisūtra*), *Tun-chen-t'o-lo ching* (*T* 624, 3 fasc., *Drumakin-nararājaparipṛcchā#*), *A-she-shih-wang ching* (*T* 626, 2 fasc., *Ajātaśatrukaukṛtyavinodana#*), and *A-ch'u-fo-kuo ching* (*T* 313, 2 fasc., *Akṣobhyatathāgata-syavyūha#*).

The *Tao-hsing pan-jo ching* is a translation of the *Aṣṭasāhasrikā-PP (Perfection of Wisdom in 8,000 Lines)*. The contents of Lokakṣema's translation are almost identical to the contents of Kumārajīva's translation of the *Perfection of Wisdom in 8,000 Lines* (*T* 227), completed in 408. Thus by Lokakṣema's time the *Perfection of Wisdom in 8,000 Lines* had already assumed its final form. The *Tao-hsing ching*'s length of ten fascicles and its organization into thirty chapters suggest that the Indian text had a long history before it reached the length and format found in Lokakṣema's translation. The final three chapters (on the bodhisattva Sadā-prarudita and other topics) were the last to be compiled. They include passages concerning the making of Buddha images and thus must have been composed sometime during or after the last half of the first century C.E., when images of the Buddha first appeared. The first twenty-seven chapters are older, but these chapters were not all composed at the same

time, since earlier and later portions of the text can be distinguished. The twenty-fifth chapter concerns the transmission of the text to later generations and probably marked the end of the text at one time. The twenty-sixth and twenty-seventh chapters were added to the text later; they concern such topics as the appearance of Akṣobhya Buddha and his Buddha-field. Of the first twenty-five chapters, the first, "The Practice of the Way" (Tao-hsing), is the oldest. The compilation of the text was obviously a complicated process that occurred in a series of stages. The earliest version of it was probably composed sometime between 100 B.C.E. and 50 C.E.

The sixteenth chapter of the *Tao-hsing ching* includes teachings from the bodhisattva Maitreya and a discussion of Akṣobhya's Buddha-field. In the twenty-fourth chapter, Akṣobhya Buddha's performance of bodhisattva practices in past lives is discussed. These topics are also found in the *A-ch'u-fo-kuo ching* (*T* 313, *Akṣobhyatathāgatasyavyūha#*), translated by Lokakṣema. Consequently, the earliest version of the *Akṣobhyatathāgatasyavyūha* was probably composed earlier than 50 C.E., before the sixteenth and twenty-fourth chapters of the *Tao-hsing ching* were composed.

Lokakṣema's translation of the *Śūraṅgamasamādhisūtra* is not extant. However, its contents can be deduced from Kumārajīva's translation of the *sūtra* (*T* 642). This *sūtra* concerns the power of an intense meditation that forms the basis of a bodhisattva's practices. With the help of this meditation, a practitioner can make substantial progress in his cultivation of the six perfections. The important role of the six perfections in the *sūtra* indicates that the text is closely related to the perfection of wisdom *sūtras*. The concern with the progression of the stages of practice suggests a connection with the *Daśabhūmikasūtra,* a text that relates the stages of practice on the bodhisattva path. In fact, the term *"shih-ti"* (ten stages or *daśabhūmi*) appears in Kumārajīva's translation of the *Śūraṅgamasamādhisūtra*. The descriptions of the power of the *śūraṅgama* concentration probably arose from reflections on the willpower and self-awareness required of the men who performed bodhisattva practices. The bodhisattva Mañjuśrī was a personification of the ideal figure who had mastered such religious practices. Consequently, the practices performed by Mañjuśrī in times past are described in the *sūtra*. The *Śūraṅgamasamādhisūtra* reveals that the Mahāyāna bodhisattva viewed his practice as being distinct from that of the Hīnayāna practitioners. The *Śūraṅgamasamādhisūtra* is one of the most fundamental early Mahāyāna *sūtras*. Lokakṣema's translation indicates that it existed in northern India in the first century C.E.

The *Tou-sha ching* (*T* 280) is related to the *Avataṃsakasūtra*. Since the

Daśabhūmikasūtra, another text closely connected to the *Avataṃsakasūtra,* is quoted in the *Śūraṅgamasamādhisūtra,* early versions of a number of *sūtras* related to the *Avataṃsakasūtra* must have existed before the first century C.E.

The *Bhadrapālasūtra* (*T* 418, *Pan-chou san-mei ching*), translated by Lokakṣema, concerns meditations leading to visualizations of the Buddha. These meditations were closely related to belief in the Buddha Amitābha. Although Lokakṣema did not translate the "Smaller" *Sukhāvatīvyūha,* his translation of the *Bhadrapālasūtra* indicates that beliefs concerning Amitābha Buddha were already present in India during the Kuṣāṇa dynasty. Consequently, the earliest versions of the *sūtras* concerning Amitābha probably existed before the first century C.E. However, the extant versions of the "Larger" and "Smaller" *Sukhāvatīvyūhas* were compiled later. A visualization exercise using an image of the Buddha is described in Lokakṣema's translation of the *Bhadrapālasūtra,* indicating that the version of the *sūtra* Lokakṣema translated was probably compiled after the last half of the first century C.E., when images of the Buddha first appeared. However, an image of the Buddha is not an indispensable requirement for visualizations of the Buddha. In fact, visualizations of the Buddha might have developed first, with early sculptures of the Buddha developing afterward on the basis of those visualizations. The earliest version of the *Bhadrapālasūtra* might have antedated the appearance of images of the Buddha.

The *Drumakinnararājaparipṛcchā* (*T* 624, *Tun-chen-t'o-lo ching*), translated by Lokakṣema, contains a detailed thirty-two-part explanation of the six perfections. According to the *sūtra,* the practitioner can realize many of the more advanced stages on the path to enlightenment through the six perfections. Among the benefits that may accrue to the diligent practitioner are the realization of the stage of acquiescence to the truth that *dharmas* are unproduced *(anutpattika-dharma-kṣānti),* the attainment of the stage from which no backsliding occurs *(avivartika),* progression through the ten stages *(daśabhūmi),* and nearing enlightenment. The concept of expedient teachings *(upāya)* is also explained. This *sūtra* is closely related to such works as the perfection of wisdom *sūtras,* the *Daśabhūmikasūtra,* and the *Śūraṅgamasamādhisūtra.*

Lokakṣema's translation of the *Ajātaśatrukaukṛtyavinodana* (*T* 626, *A-she-shih-wang ching*) contains a sermon the Buddha is said to have preached to King Ajātaśatru when the king was feeling deeply remorseful because he had killed his father. The Buddha explains that everything arises from the mind. The mind, however, is not a substantial entity that can be grasped; it is empty. Nevertheless, the basic nature of

the mind is purity; it cannot be tainted by defilements. Thus, the major theme of this *sūtra* is that the basic nature of the mind is originally pure, a teaching that would later develop into Tathāgatagarbha doctrine and form an important type of Mahāyāna thought. In connection with this teaching, the *sūtra* includes an account of how Mañjuśrī had practiced religious austerities in past ages, completing all the practices necessary to attain Buddhahood long ago. All Buddhas and bodhisattvas have practiced under Mañjuśrī's guidance. Even Śākyamuni Buddha, when he was a bodhisattva, practiced under Mañjuśrī. In fact, according to a famous passage in the *Fang-po ching* (*T* 629), a partial translation of the *Ajātaśatrukaukṛtyavinodana*, Mañjuśrī was the original teacher of Śākyamuni. Thus Mañjuśrī is called "the mother and father of those on the Buddha's path" (*T* 15:451a). Mañjuśrī is a personification of the wisdom produced through enlightenment, wisdom that is based on the original pure nature of the mind. Mañjuśrī and Maitreya are two of the earliest bodhisattvas to appear in Mahāyāna Buddhism, and the *Ajātaśatrukaukṛtyavinodana* is an important text for investigating the origins of these bodhisattvas.

The *Kāśyapaparivarta** (*T* 350, *I jih-mo-ni-pao ching*), translated by Lokakṣema, describes the practices of bodhisattvas by arranging them into groups, each composed of four *dharmas*. This exposition is followed by a list of thirty-two qualities a bodhisattva must possess. The *sūtra* is thus primarily concerned with bodhisattva practices and includes an early example of bodhisattva precepts. The *sūtra* is one of the oldest included in the *Mahāratnakūṭa* collections of *sūtras*. Consequently, early versions of the *Ratnakūṭa* must have existed by the first century C.E.

In conclusion, a survey of the works translated by Lokakṣema reveals that by the first century C.E. scriptures concerning the following Mahāyāna topics existed in northern India: perfection of wisdom, Akṣobhya Buddha, the doctrines of the *Avataṃsakasūtra*, Amitābha Buddha, the *śūraṅgama-samādhi*, visualizations of the Buddha such as the *pratyutpanna-samādhi*, teachings concerning Mañjuśrī, the doctrine that the original nature of the mind is pure, and the teachings that typify the *Mahāratnakūṭa* collection of *sūtras*. Lokakṣema did not translate any works related to the *Lotus sūtra (Saddharmapuṇḍarīka);* but surveys of Lokakṣema's translations reveal that representative works of the other significant varieties of Mahāyāna literature were found in northern India by the first century C.E.

During the reign of Emperor Ling (168–189), at the same time that Lokakṣema was active, Yen Fo-t'iao and An Hsüan were translating the *Ugradattaparipṛcchā* (*T* 322, *Fa-ching ching*), a *sūtra* belonging to the

Mahāratnakūṭa group. Chih Yao, K'ang Meng-hsiang, and Wei-chi-nan were also translating works at this time. Later, between approximately 222 and 253, Chih Ch'ien translated works such as the *Vimalakīrtinirdeśa*. He is credited with the translation of thirty-six works totaling forty-eight fascicles. The works translated by Chih Ch'ien probably were not all compiled in India between Lokakṣema's time and his; some of them probably existed before Lokakṣema's time. Thus by the end of the first century C.E., Mahāyāna Buddhist thought in northern India existed in many varieties. The first versions of the perfection of wisdom *sūtras* and texts concerning Akṣobhya Buddha were probably compiled even earlier and date back to before the common era.

The Earliest Mahāyāna Scriptures

Although Lokakṣema's translations include the earliest extant Mahāyāna scriptures, texts antedating those translations must have existed. Such texts are quoted in Lokakṣema's translation the *I jih-mo-ni-pao ching* (*T* 350, *Kāśyapaparivarta**), in which a bodhisattva is advised to study both the *Liu po-lo-mi ching (Ṣaṭpāramitā, Sūtra* on the Six Perfections) and the *P'u-sa-tsang ching (Bodhisattvapiṭaka)*. Since these last two *sūtras* are cited in the *I jih-mo-ni-pao ching*, they must have been compiled before it. In addition, in the *Fa-ching ching* (*T* 322, *Ugradattaparipṛcchā*), translated by Yen Fo-t'iao and An Hsüan in 181, practitioners are advised to chant the *San-p'in ching (Triskandhaka)* six times every twenty-four-hour period. Since the *Triskandhaka* is cited in the *Fa-ching ching* it must antedate the *Fa-ching ching*. Since the *I jih-mo-ni-pao ching* and the *Fa-ching ching* were compiled by the end of the first century C.E., the three Mahāyāna texts cited in them probably date back to sometime before the beginning of the common era.[3]

Among the *sūtras* translated by Chih Ch'ien is the *Ta a-mi-t'o ching* (*T* 362, *Sukhāvatīvyūha**), completed sometime between 223 and 252. Two of the earliest Mahāyāna *sūtras*, the *Tao-chih ta-ching* and the *Liu po-lo-mi ching*, are cited in the *Ta a-mi-t'o ching*. The *Liu po-lo-mi ching (Ṣaṭpāramitā)* cited in the *Ta a-mi-t'o ching* is probably the same work referred to in the *I jih-mo-ni-pao ching*. Unfortunately, nothing is known about the *Tao-chih ta-ching*.

In conclusion, the *sūtras* translated by Lokakṣema and Chih Ch'ien were not the first Mahāyāna *sūtras*. Rather, these translations clearly reveal the existence of an even earlier group of Mahāyāna scriptures. The emergence of the very first Mahāyāna scriptures can thus be placed in the first century B.C.E.

The Origins of the *Prajñāpāramitāsūtras* in South India

According to the following passage from the *Tao-hsing pan-jo ching* (*T* 224), the perfection of wisdom *sūtras* first arose in South India. "After the Buddha's death, the perfection of wisdom spread in the south. From the south it spread to the west, and from the west to the north" (*T* 8:446a–b). Similar passages indicating that the perfection of wisdom literature had its origins in the south are found in the *Ta-p'in pan-jo ching* (*T* 8:317b) and the *Hsiao-p'in pan-jo ching* (*T* 8:555a).

Such passages by themselves do not provide conclusive evidence that the perfection of wisdom literature came from the south; but other evidence does suggest that Mahāyāna Buddhism flourished in South India at an early date. After the *prajñāpāramitā* literature had appeared, Nāgārjuna is said to have lived at Śrīparvata or Brāhmaragiri in South India and to have received the patronage of the Sātavāhana royal family. An inscription has been found indicating that Śrīparvata was at Nāgārjunakoṇḍa. Among the disputes discussed in the Theravāda work *Kathāvatthu* are several identified by Buddhaghosa in his commentary involving positions maintained by a Vetulyaka School, which he called the Mahāsuññatavādin School (*The Debates Commentary*, bk. 17, chap. 6–10). The adherents of this school may have been advocates of *prajñā-pāramitā* positions. The *Kathāvatthu* contains detailed information about Buddhism in the south, but it is much less complete in its presentation of the doctrines of the northern schools, such as the Sarvāstivādins. Consequently, the inclusion of Mahāsuññatavādin positions in this text may indicate that the Mahāsuññatavādin School was from South India. According to the Sri Lankan chronicles, King Goṭhābaya expelled the Vetulyaka monks from Sri Lanka in the third century C.E.

According to the *Ju fa-chieh p'in (Gaṇḍavyūha)* chapter of the *Hua-yen ching* (*T* 9:687c; 10:332c, 677a, *Avataṃsakasūtra*), when Mañjuśrī left the Buddha at Śrāvastī, he traveled to the south. There he lived at a large *caitya* to the east of Dhanyākara (Chüeh-ch'eng), a place that may correspond to Dhānyakaṭaka. Among Mañjuśrī's many believers was a youth named Sudhana. According to the *Gaṇḍavyūha*, Sudhana went on a long journey to hear the Dharma and visited Avalokiteśvara, who was staying on Mount Kuang-ming (Potalaka?) in South India (*T* 9:717c). The *Gaṇḍavyūha* is thus closely related to Buddhism in South India. In addition, many of the stories about Mañjuśrī concern South India.

The above evidence suggests that many Early Mahāyāna scriptures originated in South India. An investigation of inscriptions from South India reveals that the schools of Nikāya Buddhism in the Mahāsaṅghika lineage were also prominent in South India. Although these inscriptions

date from the second century C.E. and later, these schools must certainly have been present in South India before the second century C.E. On the basis of such evidence, some scholars have argued that Mahāyāna Buddhism might have developed out of the Mahāsaṅghika School. In fact, some connection seems to have existed between the two forms of Buddhism. However, since the doctrines of the Mahāsaṅghika School and the schools that split off from it (such as the Pūrvaśaila, Uttaraśaila, and Caitika) are not clearly known, the similarities between Mahāyāna Buddhism and the schools in the Mahāsaṅghika lineage cannot be determined with precision.

The Significance of Predictions about the Rise of Mahāyāna during the "Latter Five Hundred Years"

The thousand years following the Buddha's death are often divided into two five-hundred-year periods in Buddhist texts. Statements about the decline of the true teaching during the latter five hundred years occur frequently in Mahāyāna texts. The phrase "latter five hundred years" is contrasted with the "former five hundred years," the first five hundred years after the Buddha's death. According to the stories in the *Vinaya* about the founding of the order of nuns, when Śākyamuni Buddha first admitted women to the Buddhist order, he stated that his teaching should last a thousand years; the admission of nuns to the order, however, would shorten the period to five hundred years. Consequently, the true teaching was expected to flourish during the former five hundred years, but to decline during the latter five hundred years. Mahāyāna texts stress that the true teaching had to be carefully guarded and maintained during the latter five hundred years. The presence of such words in Mahāyāna texts suggests that these texts were composed sometime later than five hundred years after the Buddha's death.

Early Mahāyāna texts date from the first century B.C.E. If the Buddha died in 484 B.C.E., then "the former five hundred years" would have elapsed in the first century C.E. If the Buddha died in 386 B.C.E., then the "former five hundred years" would have elapsed in the second century C.E. These dates must be reconciled with the evidence suggesting that Mahāyāna texts began appearing in the first century B.C.E.

The Mahāyāna texts that include statements about the latter five hundred years are usually later texts or late recensions of early texts. For example, studies of perfection of wisdom literature reveal examples of such statements in Kumārajīva's translation of the *Aṣṭasāhasrikā-PP* (*T* 4:555c), which was completed in 408, but not in the earlier transla-

tion of this *sūtra* by Lokakṣema dated 179 (*T* 224). Of the translations of *Pañcaviṃśatisāhasrikā-PP* these statements appear in Hsüan-tsang's translation (*T* 7:594b, 809a), dated between 659 and 653, but not in the translations by Mokṣala (*T* 221), completed in 291, or by Kumārajīva (*T* 223), completed in 404. Consequently, statements concerning the latter five hundred years were probably not included in the earliest versions of Mahāyāna *sūtras* but were added later. The figure of five hundred years after the Buddha's death cannot be used to determine the date of the first appearance of Mahāyāna scriptures.[4]

Studies concerning the history of the translation of Buddhist scriptures into Chinese reveal that a variety of Mahāyāna scriptures was circulating in India during the Kuṣāṇa dynasty in the first century C.E. If scriptures existed at this time, then authors and believers must also have been present. These early believers must have put Mahāyāna teachings into practice and cultivated the six perfections and the *śūraṅgamasamādhi*. Places for practice must have been established. Because teachings were transmitted from teacher to disciple, orders must have formed. The existence of such institutions can easily be imagined in first-century India.

CHAPTER 16

The Origins of Mahāyāna

Mahāyāna and Hīnayāna

THE TERM "Mahāyāna" is usually translated as "Great Vehicle" and
the term "Hīnayāna" as "Small Vehicle." The original meaning of the
element *hīna* in the term "Hīnayāna" is "discarded"; it also denotes
"inferior" or "base." The appellation "Hīnayāna" thus was a depreca-
tory term used by Mahāyāna practitioners to refer to Nikāya (Sectar-
ian) Buddhism. No Buddhist groups ever referred to themselves as
Hīnayānists.

It is unclear whether Mahāyānists referred to the whole of Nikāya
Buddhism as Hīnayāna or only to a specific group. The arguments of
the *Ta-chih-tu lun* (*T* 1509, *Mahāprajñāpāramitopadeśa*) are primarily
directed against the Vaibhāṣikas of the Sarvāstivādin School. The Sar-
vāstivādins were viewed as Hīnayānists in this and many other Mahā-
yāna texts. Unfortunately, it is not known whether the term "Hīna-
yāna" in Mahāyāna scriptures also referred to the Theravādins and
Mahāsaṅghikas.

In his travel diary, the Chinese Buddhist pilgrim Fa-hsien (d. 423?)
divided the areas where Indian Buddhism was practiced into three cate-
gories (*Fo-kuo chi, T* 2085, *Record of Buddhist Lands):* Mahāyana, Hīna-
yāna, and mixed (Hīnayāna and Mahāyāna practiced together in the
same area). A comparison of Fa-hsien's travel diary to that of another
Chinese pilgrim, Hsüan-tsang (600–664), *Hsi-yu chi* (*T* 2087, *A Record of
Travels to Western Regions*), clearly indicates that Fa-hsien used the term
"Hīnayāna" to refer to all of the schools of Nikāya Buddhism. Hsüan-

tsang understood Indian Buddhism in approximately the same manner. Hsüan-tsang placed the epithet "Hīnayāna" in front of the names of certain schools, such as the Sarvāstivādin, Sammatīya, and Lokottaravādin. In other cases, he noted that the people of an area were Hīnayāna Buddhists or that they followed Hīnayāna teachings, but he did not designate the name of their school. When he discussed the two areas where he found Theravādins and the three places where he found Mahāsaṅghikas, he used only the name of the school without the epithet "Hīnayāna."[1] This difference is probably not significant. However, when he discussed the five areas where he found groups associated with the Sri Lankan Theravāda School, he referred to them as "Mahāyāna Theravādins."[2] The Abhayagiri sect of the Theravāda School that was influential in Sri Lanka at this time seems to have adopted many Mahāyāna teachings. Later, it was expelled from Sri Lanka by the Mahāvihāra sect, which dominates Sri Lankan Buddhism today. The surviving commentaries *(Aṭṭhakathā)* of the Mahāvihāra sect, when closely examined, include a number of positions that agree with Mahāyāna teachings. Consequently, Hsüan-tsang referred to the Sri Lankan Theravāda School as "the Mahāyāna Theravāda School." Thus, Hsüan-tsang did not regard all sects of Nikāya Buddhism as Hīnayāna. However, he regarded the Lokottaravādin sect, which is of Mahāsaṅghika lineage, as Hīnayāna despite the many Mahāyāna elements found in the Lokottaravādin biography of the Buddha, the *Mahāvastu.*

Hīnayāna and Mahāyāna Buddhism are not so clearly distinguished in I-ching's (635–713) travel diary, the *Nan-hai chi-kuei nei-fa chuan* (*T* 2125, *A Record of Buddhism in India and the Malay Archipelago*). I-ching observed no significant differences in the life styles of Hīnayāna and Mahāyāna monks. Both followed the *vinaya,* were expected to use three robes and a begging bowl, and based their practice on the Four Noble Truths. I-ching noted that "those who paid homage to bodhisattvas and read Mahāyāna *sūtras*" were Mahāyāna practitioners, while those who did not do so were Hīnayāna. Only the Mādhyamika and Yogācāra schools were consistently referred to as Mahāyāna.[3] I-ching spent most of his time at the large monastery at Nālandā in central India. His use of the terms "Hīnayāna" and "Mahāyāna" may indicate that the divisions between the two types of Buddhism were not very clearly observed at Nālandā in the seventh century.

Hsüan-tsang and I-ching traveled in India when Mahāyāna Buddhism was in its middle period. Their writings, consequently, do not describe Early Mahāyāna Buddhism. However, in general, the term "Hīnayāna" was most often applied to the Sarvāstivādin School.

The terms "Śrāvakayāna" (vehicle of the listener) and "Bodhisattva-yāna" (vehicle of the bodhisattva) are even older than the terms "Hīnayāna" and "Mahāyāna." Hīnayāna was eventually substituted for Śrāvakayāna and Mahāyāna for Bodhisattvayāna. Śrāvakayāna was probably used to refer to Nikāya Buddhism in general.

The Meaning of Hīnayāna and Mahāyāna

The element *yāna* in the terms "Hīnayāna" and "Mahāyāna" literally means "vehicle," and it refers to Buddhist doctrine. By practicing in accordance with doctrine, a person could cross the river of cyclic existence, traveling from the shore that represented the realm of delusion to the other shore, which represented the realm of enlightenment. Doctrine was compared to a vehicle that would take the practitioner to salvation.

The differences between Hīnayāna and Mahāyāna doctrine are many. But the major difference, at least according to the Mahāyāna tradition, lies in the attitudes of each toward the salvation of others. The Mahāyāna tradition maintains that a person must save himself by saving others. The Mahāyāna descriptions of religious practice as the six perfections *(pāramitā)* illustrate how a person could benefit himself only by helping others. These doctrines reflected a view of the world based on the teaching of Dependent Origination.

In contrast, according to Sarvāstivādin and Theravādin doctrine, the goal of practice was to attain salvation for oneself by cutting off all defilements. Once salvation had been attained, the practitioner had accomplished all that was to be done and entered *nirvāṇa*. Saving others was not a necessary requirement for the completion of practice. Even after enlightenment had been attained, helping others was not required. Śrāvakayāna Buddhism was sometimes called "Buddhism for disciples" because it could be mastered by practicing under qualified teachers. The practitioner was not required to progress from being student to teacher. The term *"śrāvaka,"* which means "listener" or "one who studies," also reflects these qualities. This lack of social concern is probably related to the understanding of the doctrine of Dependent Origination professed by many of the schools of Nikāya Buddhism. For them, Dependent Origination referred to the interaction of discrete entities, each with its own nature.

Within the Śrāvakayāna tradition, teachings were transmitted from teacher to disciple. Preaching the Dharma and teaching were practices performed by monks. Because Śrāvakayāna doctrines did not require

monks to help others as an integral part of their practice, however, these doctrines were considered "Hīnayāna" by Mahāyāna advocates. While Mahāyānists called the Hīnayāna tradition "Buddhism for disciples," they conceived of the Mahāyāna tradition as a form of Buddhism that would allow them to become teachers. It was a teaching that would enable them to become Buddhas, to become equal to the Buddha, the teacher of the *śrāvakas*. Mahāyāna Buddhism encouraged the practitioner to teach even while he was studying, an attitude based on the premise that the practitioner already possessed the potential necessary to realize Buddhahood. A person who knew that he had this potential was called a bodhisattva. The Mahāyāna conception of the bodhisattva was modeled on the accounts of Śākyamuni Buddha's former lives, which were related in Buddhist literature. Thus, Mahāyāna Buddhism was a teaching or vehicle for bodhisattvas, a *bodhisattvayāna*. Some Mahāyāna practitioners believed that all people, not only themselves, possessed the potential to become Buddhas. These practitioners wished to help all other people realize that they too had this potential and consequently stressed the importance of helping others. Their beliefs eventually developed into the doctrine that all sentient beings possess the Buddha-nature. Thus, Mahāyāna Buddhism was concerned with lay people and this world while Hīnayāna Buddhism was a monastic form of Buddhism characterized by withdrawal from the everyday world.

These differences in attitudes between Hīnayāna and Mahāyāna Buddhism resulted in a variety of divergent doctrines. For Hīnayāna Buddhists, *nirvāṇa* was the final goal, characterized by some Mahāyānists as the extinction of body and mind. In contrast, Mahāyāna Buddhists argued that the practitioner was to attain "active *nirvāṇa*" *(apratiṣ-ṭhita-nirvāṇa)* in which he did not remain quiescent. Bodhisattvas such as Mañjuśrī, Samantabhadra, and Avalokiteśvara had more powers than Buddhas, but continued to devote themselves to saving sentient beings instead of attaining Buddhahood. Buddhas such as Amitābha or Śākyamuni (as an eternal Buddha) never entered extinction *(parinirvāṇa)*. They continued to help sentient beings. Entering *nirvāṇa* was seen as nothing more than an expedient means to help save sentient beings. Nobody actually entered *nirvāṇa* as an ultimate state, according to this Mahāyāna view.

The emergence of these teachings was made possible by the development of the doctrine of nonsubstantiality *(śūnyatā)* and new interpretations of the concepts of the Middle Way and Dependent Origination that diverged from the views of Nikāya Buddhism. Mahāyāna views of the Buddha also differed from those of Nikāya Buddhism. Mahāyāna Buddhism distinguished three bodies of the Buddha: *dharmakāya (dharma*

body), *saṃbhogakāya* (body of bliss), and *nirmāṇakāya* (manifested body). The stages of practice for the Mahāyānists led to the attainment of Buddhahood. Consequently, Mahāyāna paths to enlightenment such as the ten stages *(daśabhūmi)* or forty-two stages had little in common with the Hīnayāna list of four candidates and four fruits or with the Hīnayāna goal of becoming an *arhat*. Some Mahāyānists conceived of the Buddha as a savior of helpless beings and developed doctrines concerning easier paths to salvation or the Buddha's use of his own power to save men. Such doctrines were found only in Mahāyāna Buddhism.

Still other differences between Hīnayāna and Mahāyāna Buddhism could be indicated, but the basic distinction lies in the Mahāyāna insistence that helping others is a necessary part of any effort to save oneself while Hīnayāna doctrine stresses the salvation of oneself.

The Three Sources of Mahāyāna Buddhism

The origins of Mahāyāna Buddhism are still not completely understood. Three sources appear to have made significant contributions to the rise of Mahāyāna Buddhism. These sources are stated briefly here and then explained in more detail in the following sections of this chapter. The first source is Nikāya (Sectarian) Buddhism. Many modern scholars have maintained the view that Mahāyāna Buddhism developed out of the Mahāsaṅghika School. But since the Mahāsaṅghika School continued to exist long after Mahāyāna Buddhism arose, the rise of Mahāyāna cannot be explained simply as the transformation of the Mahāsaṅghikas into Mahāyānists. While it is true that the many similarities between Mahāsaṅghika and Mahāyāna doctrines prove that the Mahāsaṅghika School did influence Mahāyāna Buddhism, teachings from the Sarvāstivādin, Mahīśāsaka, Dharmaguptaka, and Theravāda schools were also incorporated into Mahāyāna Buddhism. The doctrines of the Sarvāstivāda School in particular were often mentioned in Mahāyāna texts, and Sammatīya teachings also were influential. The relation between Nikāya Buddhism and Mahāyāna Buddhism clearly is not a simple one.

The second source is the biographical literature of the Buddha composed by people sometimes said to have belonged to the "vehicle that praised the Buddha" (Ch. *tsan-fo sheng*).[4] Although this literature may have had its origins in Nikāya Buddhism, it eventually developed in ways that transcended sectarian lines and contributed to the rise of Mahāyāna Buddhism.

The third source is *stūpa* worship. After the Buddha's death, his

remains were divided and placed in eight *stūpas* built in central India. These became centers where pious Buddhists congregated. Later, King Aśoka had *stūpas* built in other parts of India, further contributing to the spread of *stūpa* worship. These cults appear to have contributed significantly to the rise of Mahāyāna Buddhism.

Since Mahāyāna texts do not describe the circumstances that gave rise to Mahāyāna Buddhism, any investigation must be partially based on speculation. In the following pages, the three sources of Mahāyāna Buddhism introduced above are discussed in more detail.

Nikāya Buddhism and Mahāyāna

As was noted earlier, Nikāya Buddhism was often referred to by the deprecatory epithet "Hīnayāna" (inferior vehicle) by Mahāyāna Buddhists. Nikāya Buddhism, however, contributed much to Mahāyāna Buddhism. For example, Mahāyāna texts such as the *Ta-chih-tu lun* (*T* 1509, *Mahāprajñāpāramitopadeśa,* attributed to Nāgārjuna) and the *Ta-pin pan-jo ching* (*T* 223, *Pañcaviṃśatisāhasrikā-PP**) often included references to Sarvāstivādin teachings. Mahāyāna works also adopted the twelve-fold classification of the Buddhist scriptures used by the Sarvāstivādin, Mahīśāsaka, and Dharmaguptaka schools. The Vātsīputrīya fivefold classification of *dharmas* (Ch. *wu fa-tsang*) was cited in the perfection of wisdom *sūtras.* Thus it is apparent that authors of many of the Mahāyāna scriptures had studied Hīnayāna doctrines.[5]

Doctrinal similarities between Hīnayāna and Mahāyāna works do not prove that the authors of Mahāyāna texts were current or former members of the schools of Nikāya Buddhism. Although Sarvāstivādin doctrine is far removed from Mahāyāna thought, Sarvāstivādin teachings were often mentioned or incorporated into Mahāyāna texts. In terms of content, however, Mahāsaṅghika doctrine is much closer to Mahāyāna thought than is Sarvāstivādin doctrine. The best summary of Mahāsaṅghika doctrine is found in Vasumitra's *Samayabhedoparacanacakra* (*T* 2031).[6] Although Vasumitra was a member of the Sarvāstivādin School, he seems to have been an unbiased scholar and to have accurately collected and summarized the teachings of other schools. In one of the sections of his work, Vasumitra grouped together the doctrines of four schools (the Mahāsaṅghika, Lokottaravādin, Ekavyavahārika, and Kaukuṭika) of Mahāsaṅghika lineage and noted that the four taught that "the Buddhas, the World-honored Ones, are all supermundane. All the Tathāgatas are without impure *(sāsrava) dharmas*" (*T* 49:15b). This position differs from that of the Sarvāstivādin School, but

is close to Mahāyāna teachings. The four schools also upheld the doctrine that "the Buddha can expound all the teachings with a single utterance" (*T* 49:15b). According to the *Mahāvibhāṣā* (*T* 27:410a–b), this doctrine was also maintained by the Vibhajyavādins. It is also referred to in a well-known passage in the *Vimalakīrtinirdeśa* (*T* 14:538a). Vasumitra also noted that these schools upheld the positions that "the *rūpakāya* (form-body) of the Tathāgata is limitless. The divine power of the Tathāgata is also limitless. The lifetimes of the Buddhas are limitless. The Buddha never tires of teaching sentient beings and awakening pure faith within them" (*T* 49:15b–c). These teachings are close to Mahāyāna ideas about the *saṃbhogakāya* (body of bliss) of the Buddha and are evidence of the close relationship of these schools to Mahāyāna Buddhism.

Vasumitra also described the doctrines concerning bodhisattvas maintained by the schools of the Mahāsaṅghika lineage. "No bodhisattvas have any thoughts of greed, anger, or doing harm to others. In order to benefit sentient beings, bodhisattvas are born into inferior states through their own wishes" (*T* 49:15c). The position that bodhisattvas can consciously choose where they will be born is similar to Mahāyāna teachings and differs significantly from the Sarvāstivādin position that birth is determined only by karma.

The Mahāsaṅghikas maintained that "the original nature of the mind is pure; it becomes impure when it is affected by adventitious defilements" (*T* 49:15c). This teaching is also important in Mahāyāna Buddhism. It was maintained by other groups within Nikāya Buddhism. For example, it is found in the *Śāriputrābhidharmaśāstra* (*T* 28:697b). It was also advocated by the Discriminators and appears in the Pāli *suttas*. Although this doctrine was not unique to the Mahāsaṅghika School, Mahāsaṅghika views of the Buddha were certainly close to those found in Mahāyāna Buddhism and provide evidence of a deep tie between the thought of the two groups. The exact nature of the relationship between the Mahāsaṅghika order and Mahāyāna adherents unfortunately is still unclear. Since the Sarvāstivādins also made doctrinal contributions to Mahāyāna Buddhism, the most significant and difficult problem that remains to be solved is determining what institutional ties might have existed between the Mahāsaṅghika order and Mahāyāna Buddhists.

Biographies of the Buddha

The *Mahāvastu* is a biography of the Buddha produced by the Lokottaravādins, adherents of a school related to the Mahāsaṅghika School. The

Mahāvastu[7] describes ten grounds *(bhūmi)* or stages a future Buddha
would pass through on his way to Buddhahood. Mahāyāna texts such as
the *Shih-ti ching (T* 287, *Daśabhūmikasūtra)* contain similar teachings on
the ten stages that have often been cited as evidence indicating that
Mahāyāna Buddhism arose from the Mahāsaṅghika School. However,
the *Mahāvastu* and similar literature concerning the Buddha's life tran-
scend sectarian lines. For example, at the end of the *Fo pen-hsing chi ching*
(*T* 190, *Abhiniṣkramaṇasūtra?*), a Dharmaguptaka text, it is noted that the
very same biography is called the *Ta-shih (Mahāvastu)* by the Mahā-
saṅghika School and various other names by the Sarvāstivādin, Kāśya-
pīya, and Mahīśāsaka schools, thus indicating that these schools shared
a common biography of the Buddha (*T* 3:932a).

Differences do exist between the biographies of the Buddha extant
today. The Mahāsaṅghika *Mahāvastu,* the Dharmaguptaka *Fo pen-hsing
chi ching,* and the Sarvāstivādin School's *Lalitavistara*[8] are not identical.
The *Mahāvastu* in particular diverges from the others. But earlier, the
schools do seem to have shared the same biography. Perhaps the story's
literary qualities enabled it to transcend sectarian differences. For
example, Aśvaghoṣa, author of the *Buddhacarita,* had close connections
with the Sarvāstivādin School, but he has also been connected with the
Bahuśrutīya, Kaukuṭika, Sautrāntika, and Yogācāra traditions,[9] and
thus cannot be said to belong to any single school. Rather, he and other
poets, such as Mātṛceta, may be said to belong to the "vehicle of those
who praise the Buddha" (Ch. *tsan-fo sheng*).

Mātṛceta lived in the second or third century and ranks next to
Aśvaghoṣa as a Buddhist poet. His poems, exemplified by such works as
the *Śatapañcāśatka-stotra* (One-hundred-fifty strophes) and the *Varṇā-
harvarṇa-stotra* (Four-hundred strophes), were well loved throughout
India.[10] In his poems, Mātṛceta praises the Buddha. Because the Bud-
dha is portrayed in a very human way, Mātṛceta seems to have been
influenced by Sarvāstivādin doctrines. However, Mātṛceta also praises
the Buddha's virtues as innumerable, the Buddha's wisdom as thor-
ough, and his mind as limitless, descriptions close to Mahāyāna views
of the Buddha's character. Some of the verses praise the Great Vehicle
(Mahāyāna). Others explain the six perfections and the doctrine of non-
substantiality, both Mahāyāna teachings, leading some modern scholars
to believe that Mātṛceta belonged to the Mādhyamika School.

To stress the importance of faith in the Buddha, poets fervently
praised him and used literary expressions that transcended sectarian
doctrinal considerations. Buddhist poets wrote their works with pur-
poses different from those of scholars who were concerned with doctri-
nal issues. The term "vehicle of those who praise the Buddha" appears
in Kumārajīva's translation of the *Saddharmapuṇḍarīkasūtra* (*T* 9:9c); but

a corresponding term does not appear in the Sanskrit versions of the
sūtra. In the Mahāvibhāṣā, the teaching of the Discriminators who
argued that the Buddha expounded all his teachings in a single sound is
criticized: "Those (who compose) hymns of praise for the Buddha are
too verbose and exceed the truth" (T 27:410a-b). This passage evi-
dently refers to the poets who were composing hymns of praise for the
Buddha.

The biographers of the Buddha were probably identical to those peo-
ple who belonged to the "vehicle of those who praise the Buddha." In
the following discussion, the relationship between Mahāyāna Buddhism
and the early authors of these biographies (those who preceded
Aśvaghoṣa) is considered.

Biographies of the Buddha probably developed out of vinaya litera-
ture. In the beginning of the Mahāvastu is a statement that the Mahāvastu
was originally included in the Lokottaravādin vinaya. The title of the
biography, Mahāvastu, corresponds to the first chapter (Mahākhandhaka)
of the Mahāvagga portion of the Pāli Vinaya. The terms "vastu," "vagga,"
and "khandhaka" all were used with the meaning of "chapter" or "divi-
sion." The title "Mahāvastu" could thus be translated as "The Great
Chapter." Moreover, a biography of the Buddha is found at the begin-
ning of the Pāli Mahākhandhaka, and E. Windisch has demonstrated
that, in fact, parts of the Mahāvastu correspond to sections of the
Mahākhandhaka. As the biography of the Buddha was expanded, it was
separated from the vinaya and assumed the form of the Mahāvastu. The
title of the Mahīśāsaka equivalent of the Mahāvastu, P'i-ni-tsang ken-pen
or "basis of the vinaya-piṭaka," indicates that the biography's origins
were in the vinaya.

As the nidāna (stories illustrating the origins of the precepts) and the
avadāna (cautionary tales warning against infringements of the precepts)
in the vinaya developed, the biography of the Buddha was enlarged and
eventually separated from the vinaya. The people who compiled the
Buddha's biography had motives different from those who had studied
the nidāna and avadāna in the vinaya. Their interest in the Buddha devel-
oped out of a desire to understand the causes of the Buddha's enlighten-
ment and the practices that led to enlightenment. Narratives of the
Buddha's life were compiled and expanded with these issues in mind,
resulting in literature that had much in common with the jātakas, the
tales of the Buddha's previous lives. The biographies of the Buddha did
not have a necessary relationship to the vinaya. Rather, the compilers of
biographies of the Buddha were searching for the causes of enlighten-
ment and by chance chose the biographical material in the vinaya as the
basis for their works.

Among the extant biographies of the Buddha are the *Mahāvastu,* produced by the Lokottaravādin branch of the Mahāsaṅghika School; the *Fo pen-hsing chi ching* (*T* 190, *Abhiniṣkramaṇasūtra?*) of the Dharmaguptaka School; and the *Lalitavistara* (Sanskrit, Tibetan, and two Chinese versions, *T* 186 and 187, exist) of the Sarvāstivādin School. Although the last work is Sarvāstivādin, some of the extant versions, the Sanskrit and *T* 187, were altered so much in later times that they are completely Mahāyāna in character and contain terms such as *ju-lai-tsang (tathāgata-garbha)* and *ch'ing-ching fa-chieh* (pure *dharma*-realm). The above-named texts are Sectarian works; but much of their content does not reflect any Sectarian affiliation.

A number of other biographies that do not have any clear doctrinal affiliation are also extant. Among them are *Kuo-ch'ü hsien-tsai yin-kuo ching* (*T* 189), *T'ai-tzu jui-ying pen-ch'i ching* (*T* 185, possibly of Mahīśā-saka origins), *Hsiu-hsing pen-ch'i ching* (*T* 184), *Chung pen-ch'i ching* (*T* 196), *I-ch'u p'u-sa pen-ch'i ching* (*T* 188, *Abhiniṣkramaṇasūtra?*), *Fo pen-hsing ching* (*T* 193), and *Fo-so-hsing tsan* (*T* 192, *Buddhacarita**). The terms *"pen-ch'i"* (original arising), *"pen-hsing"* (primordial practices), and *"so-hsing"* (practices) in the titles reflect the compilers' concern with the origins and basic activities that led to enlightenment. The biographers focused their attention primarily on the events leading up to enlightenment, often abbreviating or ignoring events that followed the Buddha's enlightenment.

The biographies all include a number of the same type of events. The first is the prediction *(vyākaraṇa)* by Dīpaṅkara Buddha that the future Śākyamuni would in fact be successful in his quest for Buddhahood. The stories begin by noting that the future Śākyamuni was a young Brahman at that time. Texts differ about his name, but among those given are Sumati, Sumedha, and Megha. Regardless of the name, later biographies all begin with a former Buddha predicting the future Śākyamuni's eventual attainment of Buddhahood. The stories behind the prediction also varied. According to some versions, the prediction occurred when the young Brahman offered five flowers that he had bought from a woman to Dīpaṅkara Buddha. According to other versions, the young man was watching Dīpaṅkara approach in a religious procession when he realized that a mud puddle lay in Dīpaṅkara's path. The young man quickly unfastened his long hair and spread it over the mud puddle so that Dīpaṅkara's feet would not be soiled. Dīpaṅkara then predicted that the young man would eventually attain enlightenment and the future Śākyamuni responded by vowing that he indeed would attain it. Apparently, these stories of Dīpaṅkara's prediction circulated widely among the biographers of the Buddha.

Predictions of Buddhahood are an important element in Mahāyāna thought. Dīpaṅkara's prediction of Śākyamuni's Buddhahood is mentioned often in Mahāyāna scriptures. Eventually questions were asked about the religious practices the future Śākyamuni Buddha had performed before he had received Dīpaṅkara's prediction. The Buddha's biography was consequently extended further back in time until it covered his practices for three incalculable eons.

According to these scriptures, after he received Dīpaṅkara's prediction, the future Buddha practiced the six perfections. The people who were so vitally concerned with the events and practices that led to enlightenment naturally supposed that a future Buddha performed practices different from those who aspired to become an *arhat* or *pratyeka-buddha*. Expositions of the six perfections were first developed by the authors of biographies of the Buddha to characterize the special practices of a future Buddha. The list of ten perfections in the introduction *(nidāna-kathā)* of the Pāli *Jātaka* is probably a later expansion of the six perfections. According to the *Mahāvibhāṣā* (*T* 27:892b–c), doctrines of both four perfections and six perfections were maintained by Sarvāstivādin thinkers, with the doctrine of the four perfections eventually being declared orthodox within the Sarvāstivādin School. The biographies of the Buddha, without exception, all list six perfections, and this list of six perfections was incorporated into Mahāyāna scriptures. The authors of the biographies of the Buddha thus devised the six perfections to describe the unique practices that would lead to Buddhahood, practices that differed considerably from those followed by the Buddha's disciples.

These thinkers were also concerned with the stages of practice through which a bodhisattva passed on his way to Buddhahood. In some biographies, the following fixed phrase appears: "He had attained the tenth stage. Only one more life remained before he attained Buddhahood. He was nearing omniscience." (For example, see *Kuo-ch'ü hsien-tsai yin-kuo ching*, *T* 3:623a.) The ten stages are explained in detail only in the *Mahāvastu*. However, other biographies often contain the phrase "He had attained the tenth stage." Even though other biographies do not contain detailed explanations of the ten stages, the authors of the biographies obviously knew about the ten stages. The authors thus widely believed that a bodhisattva passed through ten stages and finally reached a position from which he would be reborn and attain Buddhahood in his next life. These doctrines concerning the ten stages were later utilized in Mahāyāna scriptures. The concept that a bodhisattva might attain a stage from which only one more birth

would be required before he attained Buddhahood *(eka-jāti-pratibaddha)* was also applied to Maitreya. Determining whether this idea arose first in relation to Śākyamuni or to Maitreya has proved to be surprisingly difficult.

Additional important points concerning biographies of the Buddha could be raised, but the above discussion should demonstrate the special characteristics of this genre of Buddhist literature. Many of the doctrines found in this literature later appeared in Mahāyāna scriptures. For example, the story of how the future Śākyamuni Buddha descended from Tuṣita heaven, assumed the form of a white elephant, and entered the womb of Māyā probably was developed by these biographers, as was the list of the eight key events in a Buddha's life (descent from Tuṣita heaven, entering his mother's womb, birth, leaving lay life, defeating the demons that represent the defilements, attaining enlightenment, preaching, and death).

Many similarities between biographies of the Buddha and Mahāyāna scriptures can be indicated. However, the fundamental differences between the two types of literature must not be overlooked. Biographies of the Buddha investigated the background of an individual who was already recognized as a Buddha. The bodhisattva discussed in these biographies had already received a prediction *(vyākaraṇa)* of his eventual Buddhahood and was therefore assured of success in his religious quest. In biographies such as the *Mahāvastu,* the possibility of many Buddhas appearing in the world at the same time was recognized. Consequently, many bodhisattvas, all of whom were assured of their eventual Buddhahood, had to exist.

In contrast, the bodhisattva portrayed in many Mahāyāna scriptures was only an individual who aspired to attain enlightenment. His eventual enlightenment was not assured. He had not received a prediction that he would eventually attain enlightenment and he even backslid in his practice. He was the ordinary man as bodhisattva. Of course, great bodhisattvas (who were not subject to backsliding and other ills) such as Samantabhadra, Mañjuśrī, Avalokiteśvara, and Maitreya were also mentioned in Mahāyāna scriptures along with the obscure, ordinary practitioner of Mahāyāna Buddhism who considered himself a bodhisattva. The question of what caused ordinary Buddhist practitioners to consider themselves bodhisattvas still remains to be answered. Since the lavish praise given the Buddha in biographies does not explain this development, another explanation must be sought. Thus, although similarities between the biographies of the Buddha and Mahāyāna scriptures exist, fundamental differences are also present.

Jātakas and Avadānas

Closely related to the biographies of the Buddha are the *jātakas* (stories of the Buddha's former lives) and the *avadānas* (P. *apadāna*, 'edifying tales concerning the Buddha'). The full title of the *Mahāvastu* is, in fact, the *Mahāvastu-avadāna*. The difference between the terms *"jātaka"* and *"avadāna"* is difficult to distinguish, partly because the meaning of the word *"avadāna"* changed over the long period during which the genre of stories was recited. Both the *jātakas* and *avadānas* are mentioned in the twelvefold classification of Buddhist literature, indicating that they were considered literary genres early in Buddhist history. Among the *Nikāyas* are texts, such as the *Mahāpadānasuttanta*, that incorporate the word *apadāna* into their titles. In the context of the twelvefold division of Buddhist literary genres, the term *"avadāna"* can usually be explained as meaning a parable or edifying fable.[11] Sometime after the contents of the *Āgamas* had been fixed, the *avadānas* were compiled independently. The Pāli *Apadāna*, a work in the *Khuddaka-nikāya*, is representative of this development. Later, many *avadāna* tales were compiled and the genre flourished. However, many details of the process of compilation are still unclear.

Today numerous works classified as *avadāna* literature are extant. Many of these texts date from approximately the beginning of the common era. Besides the *Mahāvastu*, the Sanskrit texts of the *Avadāna-śataka* (cf. *T* 200), the *Divyāvadāna*, and the *Sumāgadhāvadāna* (cf. *T* 128–129) and others have been published. In addition, many later *avadāna* works are extant, but have not yet been published.[12] These unpublished texts were compiled over a period of several centuries and are mainly mythological. They differ from earlier *avadāna* literature in this respect.

Jātaka tales are listed in both the ninefold and twelvefold classifications of Buddhist literature, indicating that they were established as an independent genre of Buddhist literature early in Buddhist history. *Jātaka* tales are among the subjects found in the carvings at Bhārhut, with twelve such tales identified in the Bhārhut inscriptions.[13] Thus, by the second century B.C.E. a number of tales had already been composed. During the subsequent centuries, many more were produced. *Jātaka* tales are presented as the former lives of the Buddha, but the material for the tales is frequently taken from Indian folk tales and fables. The content is often close to that found in the *avadāna* literature. The Pāli work, the *Jātaka*, contains 547 tales and was named after the genre it epitomizes. A five-fascicle Chinese translation (*T* 154) of the text exists. In addition, many works composed primarily of *jātaka* tales

are extant, including the *Ta chuang-yen lun ching (T* 201, *Kalpanāman-ḍitikā**), *Avadānaśataka, Divyāvadāna, Wu-pai ti-tzu tzu-shuo pen-ch'i ching* (*T* 199), *P'u-sa pen-hsing ching (T* 155, *Bodhisattvapūrvacarya?),* and *Seng-ch'ieh-lo-ch'a so-chi ching* (*T* 194). The *Liu-tu chi-ching* (*T* 152, *Ṣaṭpāramitā-saṅgraha?*) and the *P'u-sa pen-yüan ching* (*T* 153, *Bodhisattvāvadāna?*) include *jātaka* tales reworked to illustrate Mahāyāna themes. The *jātaka* tales cited in the *Ta-chih-tu lun (T* 1509, *Mahāprajñāpāramitopadeśa)* exhibit prominent Mahāyāna characteristics. Consequently, some scholars have argued that the *jātaka* tales contributed significantly to the development of Mahāyāna thought. However, the *Liu-tu chi-ching* (*T* 152, *Ṣaṭ-pāramitāsaṅgraha?*) contains sections composed after the perfection of wisdom *sūtras.* Extreme care must be exercised in determining whether the "Mahāyāna *jātaka* tales" were composed before or after the earlier Mahāyāna texts.

Drawing clear distinctions between the genres of biographical literature on the Buddha, such as the *jātakas* and *avadānas,* is very difficult. The authors of this literature must have played a significant role in the early development of Mahāyana thought. It would be revealing to know how these people made their living, what type of place they lived in, and what type of people they associated with. Answers to these problems would contribute greatly to our understanding of the rise of Mahāyāna Buddhism. Unfortunately, the available literature does not shed light on the answers to these questions.

Some of these parables and metaphors were called *upamā.* They are found in such works as the *Po-yü ching* (*T* 209) and the *Hsien-yü ching (T* 202, *Damamūkanidānasūtra).* Buddhists have used parables and metaphors to explain their teachings since the time of the Buddha. The tales used by the Dārṣṭāntikas (those who explain by using metaphors and parables) probably belong to this tradition. Many of the doctrines taught by the Dārṣṭāntikas are cited or introduced in the *Mahāvibhāṣā (T* 1545). The Dārṣṭāntikas are said to have been forerunners of the Sautrāntikas, but the validity of this claim is questionable.[14] One of the most famous Dārṣṭāntikas was Kumāralāta, the author of several works. Although he is said to have been a contemporary of Nāgārjuna, he is not mentioned in the *Mahāvibhāṣā.* Rather, his poems are cited in the *Ch'eng-shih lun* (*T* 1646, *Tattvasiddhiśāstra?*).[15] Consequently, he probably lived sometime between the compilation of the *Mahāvibhāṣā* and the *Tattvasiddhiśāstra.* A Sanskrit fragment of a work said to have been written by him, the *Kalpanāmaṇḍitikā,* was discovered in Central Asia. However, a Chinese translation of this work (*T* 201) that is close to the Sanskrit fragment is said to be by Aśvaghoṣa. Modern scholars still disagree about the authorship of the text.[16]

Stūpa Worship and Mahāyāna Buddhism

The role of *stūpa* worship in the rise of Mahāyāna Buddhism cannot be ignored. It is important in many Mahāyāna *sūtras,* including the *Saddharmapuṇḍarīkasūtra* (*T* 262) and the *A-mi-t'o ching* (*T* 366, "Smaller" *Sukhāvatīvyūha).*[17] In addition, the Mahāyāna concern with a savior Buddha can be traced to worship at *stūpas.*

In Nikāya Buddhism, the Buddha was thought of as a teacher of the Dharma. The Dharma he preached was particularly emphasized because if a person followed that Dharma, it would lead him to salvation. No matter how much the Buddha was viewed as a superhuman being, he was not considered to be capable of acting as a savior. Rather, he was praised because he had successfully accomplished that which was difficult to accomplish. Nikāya Buddhism focused on the Dharma rather than on the Buddha and consequently emphasized monasticism and rigid adherence to the precepts. In contrast, Mahāyāna Buddhism was originally concerned with laymen. Doctrines for lay bodhisattvas play a prominent role in the oldest Mahāyāna *sūtras.* Only later did Mahāyāna Buddhism increasingly develop into a religion in which monks assumed prominent positions.

Laymen were unable to strictly observe the precepts or to devote much time to meditation and thus could not put the Buddha's teachings into practice in the traditional ways. Instead, they had to depend on the Buddha's compassion for their salvation. While monastic Buddhism emphasized the Buddha's teaching, lay Buddhism emphasized the role of the Buddha in salvation. Teachings concerning the saving power of the Buddha appeared in response to the religious needs of laymen. Beliefs in the Buddhas Amitābha and Akṣobhya reflected the layman's desire to depend on someone greater than himself. This need is reflected in the following statement by Śākyamuni Buddha in the *Saddharmapuṇḍarīkasūtra* (*T* 9:14c): "The three realms are completely insecure. They are like a burning house, full of suffering. Yet the three realms are all mine and the sentient beings within them are my children."

For lay Buddhism to develop doctrinally, centers were necessary where teachers could meet students and thereby transmit doctrines to the next generation. If the lay organizations had been subordinate to the monastic orders, they would have been compelled to receive and follow the instructions of monks. Any independent development of lay doctrine under such circumstances would have been difficult. Thus, centers independent of monastic control must have existed, where people could practice, develop teachings emphasizing the Buddha, and pass these traditions on to younger generations. *Stūpas* served as such centers.

Stūpas were predominantly for laymen. According to the Pāli *Mahā-parinibbānasūtta,* when the Buddha was about to die, he told Ānanda that the monks and nuns were not to conduct a funeral service over his remains. Rather the monks were "to strive for the highest good" (P. *sadattha*). As for his remains, the Buddha stated that "Brahmans with deep faith and worthy householders would pay reverence to the remains (P. *sarīra-pūjā*) of the Tathāgata."[18] After the Buddha's death, the Mallas of Kuśinagara performed the funeral. His remains were then divided and eight *stūpas* erected by laymen. Thus from the very beginning, *stūpas* were protected and maintained by laymen, and laymen did homage at them. According to another passage in the *Mahāparinibbāna-sūtta,* four places were considered sacred to the Buddha after his death. Worship halls and memorial mounds *(cetiya)* were erected at all of them: his birthplace at Lumbinī, the site of his enlightenment at Buddhagayā, the site of his first sermon at the Deer Park, and the site of his death at Kuśinagara. Pilgrims soon began visiting these places. Thus was *stūpa* worship begun by laymen and later transmitted and maintained primarily by laymen. Even today, *stūpas (pagodas)* in Burma are administered by committees of pious laymen; monks may not participate in the administration of these *stūpas.*

King Aśoka commissioned many *stūpas.* Archeological investigations of the ruins of many of the older surviving *stūpas* have revealed that their oldest strata probably date back to Aśoka's time. The cores of the *stūpas* of central India at Bhārhut and Sāñcī and the Dharmarājikā *stūpa* at Taxila are all very early, with their oldest layers dating back to the second or third century B.C.E. Many more *stūpas* were built around the beginning of the common era. Almost all the old inscriptions excavated in recent times bear some relation to *stūpas.* Although *stūpas* were constructed and maintained by laymen, and although the majority of the donors were laymen and laywomen, they were not the only people who worshipped at them. Inscriptions on the pillars, railings, and finials at Bharhut and Sāñcī record the names of a number of monks and nuns who made donations to the *stūpas.* Since monks and nuns had few possessions, their presentation of goods suggests the profundity of their devotion.

By the beginning of the common era, *stūpas* were being built within the confines of temples. Alongside these *stūpas,* quarters for monks were constructed, making it easy for monks to present their offerings to the *stūpas.* The monasteries probably had the *stūpas* built on their grounds in response to the growing popularity of *stūpa* worship outside the monasteries. Proof of this change of attitude appears in a number of sources. For example, the Theravāda *Vinaya* does not mention *stūpas* even though *stūpas* have been built within the confines of Theravāda monas-

teries for centuries. Apparently, Theravāda monks began making offer-
ings at *stūpas* only after the *Vinaya* had been compiled. In contrast, the
Sarvāstivādin and Mahāsaṅghika *vinayas* (*T* 1435 and 1425) mention
Buddha images, indicating that the compilation of these two *vinayas* was
probably completed later than the Pāli *Vinaya*. Thus some *vinayas* com-
piled after monks had already begun worshipping at *stūpas* include dis-
cussions of *stūpa* worship. The Sarvāstivādin and Mahāsaṅghika *vinayas*
state that a strict distinction must be maintained between properties
and objects that belong to the monastic order and those that belong to
the *stūpa* (*T* 22:498a; 23:352b). They could not be used interchange-
ably. If a monk used *stūpa* property to benefit the order, he was to be
charged with a *pārājika* offense for stealing. According to the Dharma-
guptaka and Mahīśāsaka *vinayas* (*T* 1421 and 1428), the *stūpa* repre-
sented "the Buddha in the order."[19] Although *stūpas* might be built
within the monastery, items belonging to the Buddha were to be distin-
guished from those belonging to the order. Thus the *vinayas*, the legal
codes for the orders, indicate that the *stūpas* were independent of the
monastic orders.

Sources such as Vasumitra's *Samayabhedoparacanacakra* suggest that the
Dharmaguptaka School encouraged contributions to *stūpas* by main-
taining that "offerings to *stūpas* produced great merit" (*T* 49:17a). In
contrast, orders of the Mahāsaṅghika lineage such as the Caitika,
Aparaśaila, Uttaraśaila, and Mahīśāsaka schools maintained that "of-
ferings made to *stūpas* would result in only a small amount of merit" (*T*
49:16a). At least four inscriptions concerning the Caitika School have
been found at Amarāvatī in southern India. These inscriptions are
probably connected with the great *stūpa (mahācetiya)* at Amarāvatī, an
important site in the third and fourth centuries. Although the Caitika
School maintained that the merit earned by making offerings at *stūpas*
was minimal, large *stūpas* were still associated with the school.

Later sources, such as the *Mahāvibhāṣā* (*T* 1545) and the *Abhidharma-
kośa* (*T* 1558), also maintained that contributions to the monastic order
produced much more merit than those made to *stūpas* (*T* 27:678b).
Thus, although *stūpa* worship was practiced within Nikāya Buddhism,
the monastic orders did not always coexist harmoniously with the *stūpa*
cults. Buddhist believers were often discouraged from making offerings
at the *stūpas*, suggesting that *stūpa* worship was introduced into the
monastic orders after the orders had been established for a period of
time and that the monks did not want to see *stūpa* worship grow in influ-
ence. In addition to *stūpas* within monasteries, there were other *stūpas*
that were not affiliated with any of the schools of Nikāya Buddhism and
that were managed by laymen. This division is clear from the many

inscriptions that have been discovered by archeologists in recent times. The vast majority of the inscriptions concerning *stūpas* do not mention the name of a school.[20]

Flowers, incense, banners, flags, music, and dance were used in the ceremonies accompanying *stūpa* worship. Even at the Buddha's funeral, the Mallas of Kuśinagara employed music, dance, flowers, and incense to honor, revere, and respect the corpse of the Buddha before it was cremated, as is described in detail in the *Mahāparinibbānasutta* (*DN*, vol. 2, p. 159). The use of music and dance in such a ceremony was clearly forbidden to those living a monastic life. In the precepts for novices, monks, and nuns, the enjoyment of such entertainments was clearly prohibited. Music, dance, theater, architecture, and other arts conflicted with the standards of monastic life, which aimed at transcending worldly concerns. Such arts could not have flourished in Buddhist monasteries. But they did develop around *stūpa* worship and were later adopted into Mahāyāna Buddhism, where they were elaborated further. These traditions of music and dance were later transmitted to China along with Mahāyāna Buddhism, and then to Japan as *gigaku*.

Stūpa worship had a social as well as a religious dimension. It began immediately after the Buddha's death, and through the support of its adherents, *stūpa* worship gradually began to flourish. The *stūpas* erected in various areas were thronged with worshippers and pilgrims. To erect a *stūpa*, land had to be contributed by individuals. Since the land was given for a religious purpose, it was no longer owned by any particular individual. Besides the *stūpa* itself, lodging for pilgrims, wells, and pools for bathing were built on the land. These facilities were the property of the *stūpa*. A walkway around the *stūpa* was constructed so that pilgrims could worship as they circumambulated the *stūpa*. A fence with gates enclosed the area. Carvings on the fence and on the gates to the *stūpa* illustrated incidents from the Buddha's biography and the good deeds and selfless acts he had performed in his past lives. Religious specialists who explained the *jātaka* tales and the biography of the Buddha to the worshippers probably resided at the *stūpa*, as did people who managed the lodgings for the pilgrims. A religious order began to take shape.[21]

Since the *stūpas* had property, people must have been present to manage it. Gold, silver, flowers, incense, and food must have been given to the *stūpa* by believers and pilgrims. Although such alms were presented to the Buddha, they were undoubtedly accepted and used by those people who cared for the *stūpa*. These people were very different from ordinary lay believers, but also were probably not members of a monastic order. They were religious specialists who were neither laymen nor monks. As these religious specialists repeatedly explained the illustra-

tions of the *jātakas* and the biography of Śākyamuni Buddha, they extolled Śākyamuni's religious practices in his past lives as the practices of a bodhisattva and praised his greatness and deep compassion. Gradually they must have advanced doctrines to explain the Buddha's power to save others. In this way they attracted more followers to the *stūpas*.

Worship at *stūpas* might well have led to meditations in which the Buddha was visualized. Even today Tibetan pilgrims at Buddhagayā can be seen prostrating themselves hundreds of times in front of *stūpas*. Long ago as people repeatedly performed such practices while intently thinking of the Buddha, they might have entered a concentration *(samādhi)* in which the Buddha appeared before them. This concentration would correspond to the *pratyutpanna-samādhi* described in some Mahāyāna texts. Thus Mahāyāna meditations in which the Buddha is visualized may have originated in the religious experiences of people worshipping the Buddha at *stūpas*. Such religious experiences might have resulted in people coming to the belief that they were bodhisattvas.

In conclusion, the establishment of *stūpas* and the accumulation of property around them enabled groups of religious specialists to live near the *stūpas*. These people formed orders and began developing doctrines concerning the Buddha's powers to save. The references in many Mahāyāna texts to *stūpa* worship indicate the central role of these orders in the emergence of Mahāyāna Buddhism. In some Mahāyāna texts, a bodhisattva group *(bodhisattvagaṇa)* is mentioned as existing separately from the order of monks of the Nikāya schools *(śrāvakasaṅgha)*.[22] The *bodhisattvagaṇa* probably had its origins in the groups of people who practiced at *stūpas*. However, the origins of the advocates of the perfection of wisdom literature must be sought in different areas.